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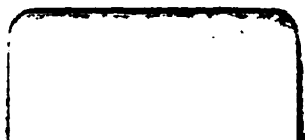
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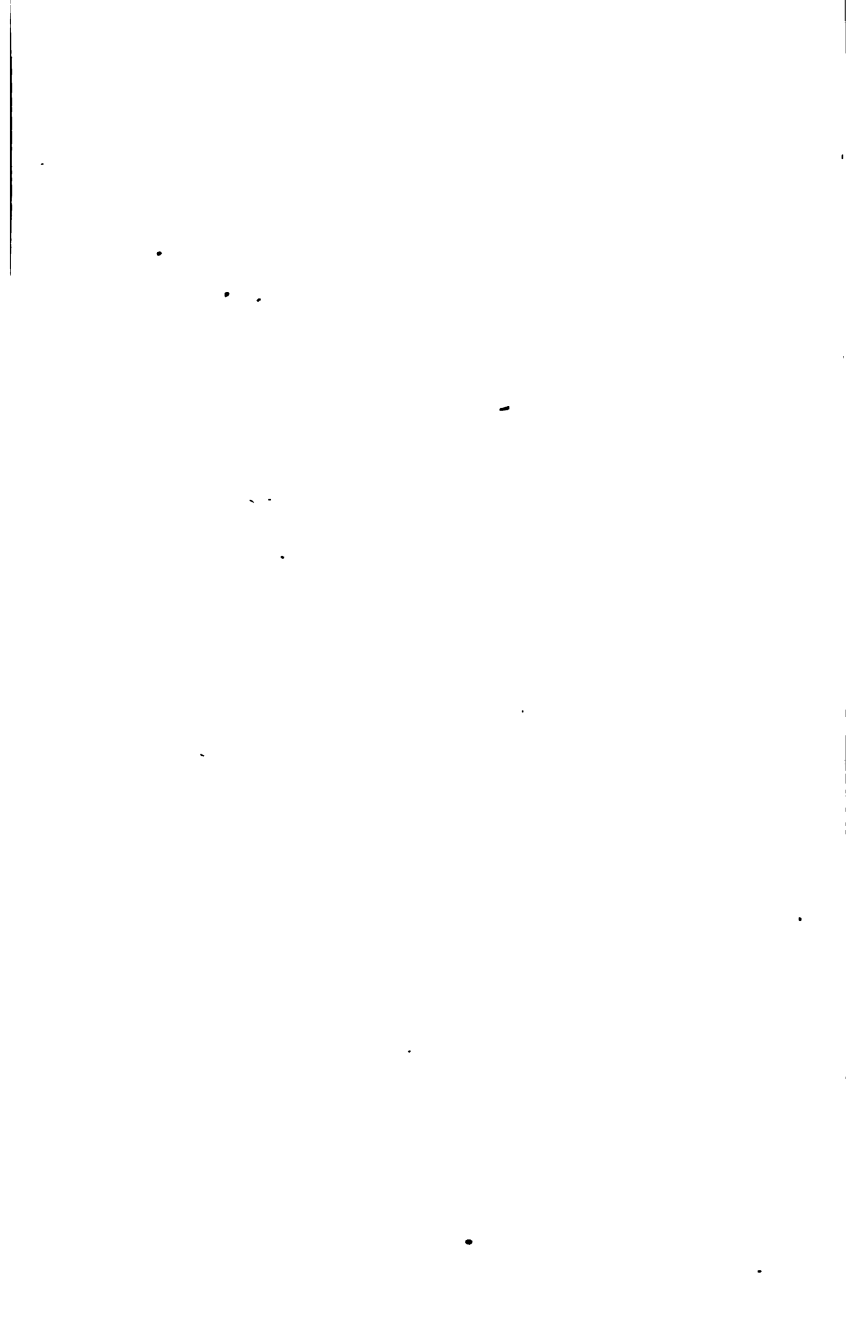
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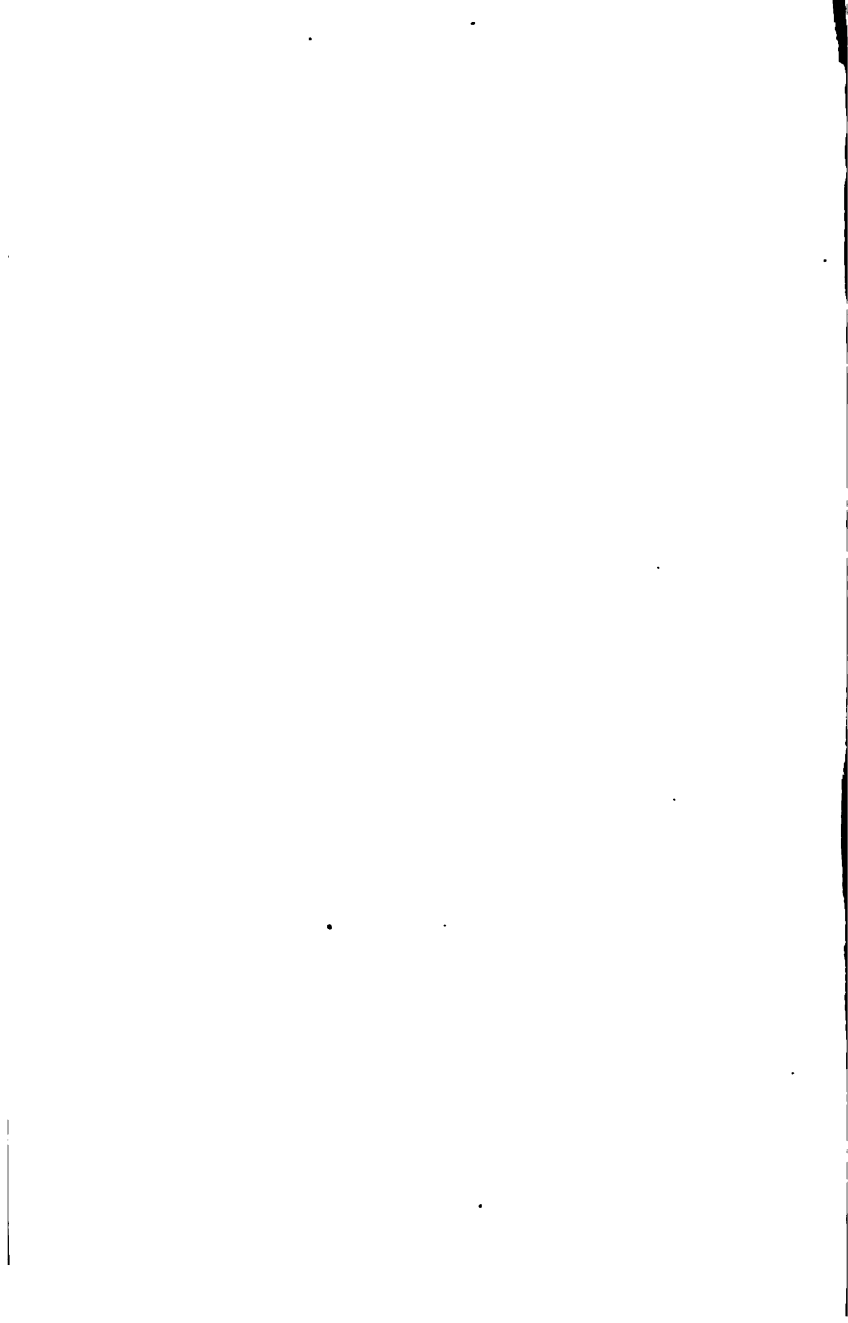
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**THE  
GENERATION  
BETWEEN**



# THE GENERATION BETWEEN

By C. M. MATHESON

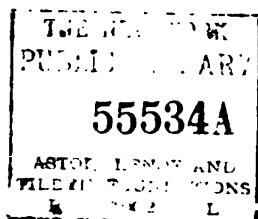


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# THE GENERATION BETWEEN

## CHAPTER I

THOMASINE LATIMER sat alone in the schoolroom late in the afternoon of an October day. She sat leaning back in her chair, her feet outstretched, her hands grasping the edge of the ink-stained table, her brows meeting over her eyes in a heavy frown.

Face down on the table before her was a soiled and dog-eared copy of Mr. Belloc's "Path to Rome," and not once but many times had she read and re-read that sentence in the beginning of the book which defines "the moment (not the year or the month, mind you, or even the hour, but the very second) when a man is grown up, when he sees things as they are . . . and feels solidly for himself."

And thus Thomasine sat and scowled, for it seemed to her that that moment had come.

To be young, says the poet, is to be happy. Youth is likened to an entrancing May-time; yet does it not seem more true that youth with its inexperience, its frail illusions, its strange emotions and discoveries, its impatience, is more prone to sorrow than maturity, which has learnt to take

life as it comes, knowing there is no way of escape from the toils?

Thomasine knew just this—that life had, during the passing of one bright October day, widened out into a realm so vast and strange, that she, one lonely girl, seemed lost in it; and yet it had narrowed too—narrowed till it seemed there was no room for even the sun to shine.

Yet nothing very great had happened. Only she had been told quite decisively that she must be content with her last year's clothes for the winter, and that she could not accept Ruth Newton's invitation to Edinburgh.

"No, you cannot possibly do it," Mrs. Latimer had said. "You must understand that all our expenses must be cut down until the boys are quite settled in life."

And Thomasine was sufficiently of the new generation, the new order of thought, to resent immediately this passing over of the girl for the boys.

"But, Mother," she said indignantly, "I want to be arranged for, too, and I am the oldest."

"Yes, I know, but you must wait. Edinburgh and new clothes are luxuries."

"Edinburgh isn't a luxury, Mother. You know I should study with Ruthie while there."

"Oh! Tamsie, don't worry me now. You cannot go without an entirely new outfit, and there is no money at all. You must wait. I know all the advantages of the idea, but it simply cannot be done. And it is such a distance from Plymouth to Edinburgh."

"I could make some clothes," Thomasine had insisted.

"Oh, my dear child, you can make nothing suitable. And, besides, I shall want you at home, for Jane is to leave at the end of the month. I can't keep two servants at present."

And now, as Thomasine sat in the schoolroom, the "Path to Rome" was before her, and the memory of these words was in her heart. All outside the open window the October day lay brown and gold. A soft, blue haze dimmed the trees in the Park. It was the very proximity of the house to this Park that somewhat reconciled Thomasine to living in town. For she of all the children was country-born, and she had come up from Cornwall to Plymouth when a little child, before the boys came. There were four of them now, and the three oldest had this term gone away to school.

"For," said their father, who was himself a scholar, "no amount of education at home is as good as life at a public school. Book-learning is not everything."

Thus, Thomasine, seventeen years of age, tall, and shabbily dressed, sat alone in the schoolroom, staring out of the window at the gold-brown trees in the Park.

Now it seemed to her that she, being a girl, was not to have those chances in life which her brothers were to have. For they were boys, and must be given careers, and she must stand back out of their way—more, she must make herself a stepping-stone especially for their benefit.

"I suppose they think I shall marry some time," Thomasine said to herself, and rebelled. "Who cares for that?" she said. "Then I should have

a husband and a house to look after. Babies, too, probably. What rot!

"Babies are all right," she continued, after an interval of chaotic thought. "But only people who can afford to bring them up and educate them ought to have them. And anyway——"

She stared out of the window with wide eyes. The dusk had stolen the colour from the trees, the blue haze had grown misty and grey. From somewhere came the scent of damp, fresh earth, newly turned, and the girl leant across the table, her arms outstretched.

She did not any longer try to put her feelings into words. She knew only that that scent called to something unknown within her, making her forget all that had troubled, all that disappointed, all sense of injustice. She went to the window and slipped lightly over the sill into the tiny square of garden which divided the house from the road. The lamplighter was already coming down the avenue, and the yellow lights sprang out in the dusk. Thomasine ran across the road to the railings which bounded the Park.

The keeper was digging in the earth just within, his back turned to her.

"Johnson," she called. "Johnson, what are you doing?"

The man turned slowly and straightened himself.

"That you, Miss?" he said. "I am making ready to plant the bulbs."

"Bulbs? Oh! What sort?"

"Tulips down this here bed, Miss, white and yellow ones. Chrysoloræ, Miss, and some of them white Albions. They'll make a fine show in the spring."

"I wish I could help. Can't you let me in? I'll dig, or do anything you like."

"It's getting dark now, Miss Tamsie. What would your Mother say?"

"Oh, she won't miss me. I can go back any time. And the lamps give plenty of light. Do let me in, Johnson."

Thomasine and the keeper had been friends since her babyhood, for she had a passion for flowers.

"Oh, I'll let you in, Miss Tamsie, if you're sure you may. I'll open the little gate at the side."

Thomasine went down to the gate and passed in quickly. She hurried by the lodge where Johnson lived alone with his daughter, for his wife was dead.

"Let me dig," Thomasine said, a little breathlessly. "No, not there—it is too near the road. Give me a spade, and I will do one of the little beds."

She took the spade from him and bent down to the bare earth.

"My Myrtle will come out to keep you company," said the keeper, watching the girl.

Thomasine paid him no heed. She crumbled the soil between her fingers.

"It is heavy and a little sticky," she said. "You will put some sand?"

"Jonquils in this bed, Miss Tamsie. They will want a rich soil."

"Oh, I thought it would be tulips here, too."

"No, tulips by the rails."

"These little beds will be sweet. What else are you having?"

"Crocus, and some anemones."

"Hyacinths, too?"

"A few by the gates."

Thomasine struck the spade deep into the earth, thrusting it down with her foot.

"Oh, I wish I had acres of garden," she said, "I would fill every inch of it with flowers. I'd have hollyhocks and gladioli against the wall, and white foxgloves near the shrubs, and lilies—all kinds—Japanese, arum, madonna. And I would have millions of anemones, and clove pinks, and carnations, and crimson ramblers, and tea-roses, and bushes of lilac and enormous sunflowers. And you should be head gardener and Myrtle should be a bride."

Johnson's dry, brown face wrinkled into a good-humoured smile.

"I will fetch Myrtle," he said. "She can wait by you, Miss Tamsie."

He moved away and Thomasine plied her spade with vigour.

The bed was well away from the road, and in the shadow of the trees. The soil of the bed and the grass around was strewn with fallen leaves, which came down softly from the whispering branches. Thomasine paused to roll up her sleeves.

"Oh, there you are, Myrtle," she said, finding herself not alone. "Your father ought not to have bothered you to come out. I am not lonely."

"I am pleased to come, Miss Tamsie; I was tired of sitting indoors."

"Why don't you come out and dig too? I would if my father had your father's job! I should never do a thing in the house the whole day long."

"But that would be no help to him, Miss Tamsie."

"Oh, Myrtle, gardens are just lovely. I wish I had one of my own. Your father is a brick to me. But I must not talk any more. I am going to prepare all this bed for the jonquils."

The shadows of the branches above the girls' heads moved and shifted over the dark earth, more leaves came fluttering down and, presently, a fine misty rain began to fall. Sounds of voices and footsteps came from the pavement in the avenue, and the jar of the passing trams from the road above. The scent of the fresh earth grew strong as the rain fell.

"Miss Tamsie, you will be so wet," Myrtle said at last.

"Oh, I don't mind ; I love the rain and it never hurts me. But you go in and get a coat or something."

"I will just get a coat. Shall I bring you one?"

"No, thanks. I am hot as it is."

Thomasine worked in silence until she had thoroughly turned the bed. The rain fell softly on her roughened hair, on her bare neck and arms. She felt the dampness soak through her slippers into her feet ; in her heart she exulted.

Rain and fresh earth and falling leaves ! Even the yellow gas-light which lightened the dusk but added to the charm. She dug deep, turning the soil till her arms ached, and Myrtle came back with a cloak over her head to announce the time.

"Half-past seven !" Thomasine dropped the spade. "Oh, I shall have to go. Where has

your father gone? Oh, Myrtle, you look like a nun with your cloak over your head and under your chin like that."

The girls went together to the little gate.

"Good-night, Johnson," Thomasine called. "I am coming in again as soon as I can."

She slipped out on the pavement under the trees; Myrtle nodded smilingly and closed the gate. Thomasine waited a moment half in shadow, turning down her sleeves and adjusting her hair; she stooped, and with a twig scraped the earth from her shoes.

She came out into the full light of the lamps. Some one was lounging on the other side of the road close to the pillar-box near her own gate. The girl sped across and stopped abruptly before the man who barred her way.

"Let me pass, please," she said sharply, unafraid.

"Let you pass? Now, why should I let you pass?" he said.

Thomasine caught his hand as he outstretched it to touch her, locked it against her arm and bent it back. The bully swung round as though on a pivot, and an evil word escaped him.

"Let me go, you little devil!" he said, and his breath whistled as he drew it in.

"Go away, then," said Thomasine. "Go away at once."

She passed through the gateway into her own garden, closed the gate deliberately, and went up the path to the door. The man stood by the pillar-box staring at her and nursing his arm. Thomasine saw his face quite distinctly as she

looked back. Then she opened the door and went in quietly.

No one was in the passage, and the dining-room and drawing-room doors were shut. The light behind the ruby shade flickered in the draught, and Thomasine slipped off her shoes. Lightly on her toes she sped up the stairs to the darkness of her own room.

She lighted the gas above her mirror and stood a moment looking at herself. She saw her face a little flushed beneath the shadows of the eyes ; she saw the beads of rain shine as they quivered in her hair.

It was brown hair with a ripple in it and a sheen of gold ; grey eyes with an aureole of yellow about the great black pupils, black level brows, a wide, strong-lipped mouth, and an upturned chin. It was a face of exquisite colouring, of strong features, but still immature ; the face of a child almost a woman.

Thomasine bent close to the glass. " I am very strong," she said to herself. " I am a match for those cads. I am not afraid of any one. I am a girl, and more important than a boy. And I am not going to stay here to drudge and wear shabby frocks and eat my heart out."

She stripped off her damp skirt and wet blouse. With a quick movement she loosened her long upturned tail of hair, and it fell dankly, rippling and curling at the end. She stood white-clad under the weight of her hair in the yellow light, and her face stared back at the face in the glass.

Then there rose in her a great emotion which found vent in a little half-inarticulate cry. For

she knew that she was young and strong, that she had beauty and courage, that her soul, new-born and as yet unformed, was the soul of a very woman.

There was no need to gainsay these things—simply they were so; they had come to her unsought, even undesired, gifts of the gods for which she must account.

Her mind teemed with new thoughts, new desires, ill-expressed, half-understood. She felt her blood flow quickly in her veins as she stood revealed to herself. She thought of the face of that man who had reeled back from her grip, his smile gone, his eyes full of pain and fear. She laughed at that, and the pride within her rose high.

"I will not stay at home, I will not be kept back," she said. "I will have what I want. I will do something worth while with my life."

Her imagination sprang over all difficulties, all disappointments, all weariness. The light of her faith in herself burnt steadily clear, and she placed it in the coloured lantern of her imagination so that its rays shone rose and gold, sapphire-blue and amethyst, rainbow-hued along the path of life.

"I am not afraid of any man, any woman, anything, anywhere," said Thomasine with arrogance. "I am myself, with a heart for any fate."

She gathered up her damp hair in her hand and brushed it vigorously. Then, as her colour deepened, and her hands inexplicably shook a little, she coiled the long, shining mass close about her head and pinned it securely. She studied the effect of this critically from every point of view, loosened it afresh here, subdued a ripple there, and laughed again softly, exultingly.

She turned from the mirror to the wardrobe door, pulled it open, hesitated, and frowned a little as her glance wandered over the assortment of clothing within.

Still frowning, she drew out a tussore frock, and held it to the light.

"Twenty-five and eleven, sale price," she said, "More than twelve months old, and been washed about twenty times. Oh! it is hateful."

Nevertheless she put it on and fastened it at the back with the ease afforded by long arms and extreme suppleness.

"That makes three hooks off," she muttered, "and I am always sewing 'em on. I shall pin it. . . . Yes, my shoes are soaking; stockings also."

"Brown lisle," she sighed, surveying the change. "I do wish they were silk. Aren't my ankles nice? And shoes of any kind are nice when they are nearly new. . . . I am glad my feet are so long, too. I should hate having small, podgy ones."

She surveyed the tips of the bronze shoes, and the little frown still remained to draw her black brows into line.

"Oh, I do want to be admired," she breathed fervently; "I do want to have a dear, gay time. And when I am old I will do the things I ought. . . . Yes, I suppose I *am* selfish. I suppose Mother really does want me at home. But, then, if I stay she will be selfish. There must be selfish people or there can be no unselfish ones. Of course! I never thought of that before. . . . I wonder what on earth I shall do!"

But this question did not trouble her. She

dropped her feet and stood up, and her mirror at once reminded her of the alteration in her hair. She caught her breath and her eyes dimmed.

"Oh, I am a woman," she said. "It has all come quite suddenly and unexpectedly, but it has come. And I am glad—yes, I am glad—*glad*." She lowered the gas and the vision in the mirror was lost.

"I will go downstairs. I wonder what they will say. Dad is down there, too."

## CHAPTER II

"AH, Helen, something has vexed you," said Dr. Latimer, as he watched his wife sewing industriously across the table. "What has happened this time?"

"Oh, I am not really vexed, Richard." Mrs. Latimer snapped the thread with unwonted petulance, and did not look up. She was a small woman, with an untidy figure, a pale, lined face, a cloud of soft, fair hair, rapidly turning grey, and very bright blue eyes. All about her was written the history of her life, a life which had taught her something of patience, of toil, of difficulty, of pride.

She was proud of her husband, her daughter, and her sons. Proud of the former because of his distinguished appearance; his fine dark face, a little worn, but with much that made for sweetness about the mouth; of his extreme loveliness.

She was proud, too, of her children; and now that she had ceased to build castles in the air for herself, she built them high and fair for her daughter and her sons.

While she built she sewed, sitting quietly at home, fulfilling her part in the everlasting struggle to keep up appearances.

The struggle had left her thus jaded and lined;

had left her with some disregard for her own appearance, which manifested itself in the plainness of her dress, the sagging lines of her figure, the needle-scarred forefinger of her small left hand.

"I am not really vexed," she said. "I will tell you about it. I was thinking of Tamsie—she wanted so much to go North, and it would have done her such a lot of good. I have told her that she cannot go, and that she must help me about the house now that Jane is leaving. She was disappointed, but she did not say much—only that she is older than the boys."

Dr. Latimer meditatively turned the pages of his book.

"Do you think we ought to keep her here?" he said.

"Oh, I don't know. What can she do? There is no money for her to train for anything."

"Yet it does seem unfair, especially in these days when women are going ahead. . . . I have thought of her a great deal, but I do not see what we can do. The boys must have a fair chance, because I am old-fashioned enough to believe in careers for them and marriage for the girls."

"Tamsie is very modern. She would choose a career," said Tamsie's mother.

"She will forget that when the man comes," said Tamsie's father, who held to the old beliefs.

"If he comes." Mrs. Latimer looked up with a light in her eyes. "I think of that, too," she said, "and sometimes I am afraid. Tamsie is my daughter; I know her more than she thinks."

"What do you know?" he asked, smiling a little.

"I don't think I will say. Only that she is very strong, that there are depths in her, and that she will ask a lot from life."

"Well, what can we do, Helen? We are back again at the starting-point."

"I don't know—yet," she sighed, and was silent a moment. "She must wait at present," she said. "She is not eighteen, so there is plenty of time. Only, one day I shall find her grown up, and I don't think, Dick, I really don't think she will listen to much that I shall say."

Dr. Latimer sat in meditative silence. He could hear the steady tick of the clock on the mantel, and the scratch of Helen's needle against her thimble as she sewed. He looked round the somewhat shabby room trying to see it with his daughter's eyes. This room was home, the centre of his life, where, in his leisure moments, he sat and read and where Helen sewed. The place was crowded with remembrances; there was the sofa—part of the shabby red-velvet suite—where Helen had lain on those great days when he had carried her downstairs and placed her baby by her side.

The chair in which he sat, shabby red velvet also, was the same chair in which he had held Tamsie and his boys on his knees before they went to bed. They used to scramble all over him in those days.

The piano, too, on which Tamsie played the accompaniment to Bertie's songs—Bertie, who had a voice like a flute. The shabby red walls, the

pictures in their heavy frames, the festooned mantel-border which Tamsie loathed, the book-case full of broken-backed, dog-eared books, in themselves a remarkable assortment. "We read our books," Thomasine would say when she surveyed them; "they aren't for show. Give me 'The Beloved Vagabond,' Malcolm, and go away and leave me in peace." "The Beloved Vagabond," "The Path to Rome," "Kim"—these were some of the girl's favourites. "See how these men went about," she would say; "and I can't because I am a girl. What difference does that make?"

He looked again at Helen, who had always been so bravely patient and so quietly content with the humdrum of her existence. He remembered her as she had been when first he had loved her—a slim, tall girl, pink and white, blue-eyed and sunny-haired. He remembered his mother's words of half-amused, half-tolerant criticism.

"Pink and white won't last, my lad, but have her if you must. She is only a doll, but she'll make all the wife you'll want."

Well, they had been very happy, he and Helen, though her pink and white had long since faded to pallor. Life had not been a glorious riot of colour and beauty, of great moments and deep passions, but more like life in a back-water, where the river was often a little troubled, where small pests abounded, but where the sun glinted amongst the shadows.

But Thomasine would desire the race of the current, the swiftness of water falling over stones. She would know nothing of fear, she would glory

in danger, she would find many good things to be desired.

"You are very quiet, Dick," Helen said. "What is it?"

"I was just thinking of Tamsie," he answered.

He got up from his chair to reach for his pipe. There was a little line between his brows, and Helen, again glancing at his face, so thin and worn, with nothing in it of sternness, but much of a great gentleness, thought to herself, as she so often did, that, with its close-clipped beard, it was much like the face of Christ as the artists of the world see and delineate it.

"I wish she were an ordinary woman and nothing more," he said.

"Like I am," Helen answered quickly. "Yet she calls that the unforgivable sin."

"Yes," he said equably, "like you are—absolutely dear and patient and content."

The moment's irritability died out of Helen's eyes. She looked up and laughed.

"You are very nice sometimes," she said.

He smiled back at her, then turned a little to light his pipe.

"Where is she now?" he said.

"I don't know. She was in the schoolroom. I haven't seen her since about half-past five. She is reading, I expect. . . . Oh, Dick, now the boys are gone and Malcolm is at school and Tamsie is finished, I am going to do something to the school-room."

"What are you going to do?"

"Abolish it and make it something else."

"No money," he said.

"I know. But there are ways. Oh, Tamsie shall do it herself. That will keep her occupied."

"Talking about me?" said a voice at the door—a young, soft voice which clipped the words—not so much by dropping final consonants as by making each word stand out alone with its full value of tone and meaning. Both her father and her mother turned quickly.

"I was wondering where you were," said Dr. Latimer, while Helen sat motionless, watching in silence.

"I was upstairs—at least I have come from there now. What were you saying about me?"

Thomasine advanced into the room.

"Tamsie, you have put your hair up!" There was a startled note in Helen's voice.

"Yes, Mother." Not shyly but brilliantly the girl smiled. "I am grown up," she said.

"Oh, not yet—not yet!"

"Why? why not? In two months I shall be eighteen."

"Eighteen is very young. You are just a child."

"Oh, no. I am grown up."

She swept her hand over the line of throat and breast as though she caressed herself. "And I do look very nice, don't you think?"

Helen bent low over her sewing. Thomasine looked at her a moment; her shoulders almost imperceptibly made a shrugging movement. She turned to her father and half outstretched her hand.

"Dad!" she said.

He took her hand and her fingers gripped him close.

"Let's sit down," she said, "I want to talk."

He sat down again in his chair, watching her, conscious that Helen was sewing very rapidly. Thomasine did not sit; she remained standing on the rug, and the festooned mantel-border was behind her.

"There are some things I want to say," she began. "I want to say them now; may I?"

This was altogether new and bewildering. Yesterday had Thomasine wanted to talk, she would have elevated her voice to drown any other, and have briefly announced—

"Oh, listen to me! I want to yarn."

"'When I speak, let no dog bark,'" she quoted often, saying it was her motto.

"By all means," Dr. Latimer said courteously, in answer to this request.

"Well, then," Thomasine began, with no show of hesitation, "I want to go to Higher Pendennis."

"On a visit?" asked her father.

"No, not on a visit. . . . Oh, I will begin at the beginning. Let me say all of it, and then you can tell me what you think. It is like this. Mother says I can't go North, because there is no money. She says I must stay here and work and be quiet. It isn't fair, Dad, is it? I am not grumbling about not having any money; I am not very disappointed about not going to Edinburgh; but I can't stay here week in, week out, with no frocks and no fun. I can't. I should die. I want work—lots of work—but I want money, too. I want money to pay for Life. Oh, I do want to go to Pendennis, to Uncle George. I can't think of anything else to do, and I love

farms, and animals, and gardens—gardens most of all."

She stopped a moment, and her clasped fingers gripped one another.

"I want a career, Dad. I should hate it living at home as Mother said. Daughters aren't sent to save expenses, but to live. And I should *hate* waiting for some man to come and marry me. I don't want any one—even my husband—to pay for all my things. Oh, you *must* understand. I want you both most awfully, but I want to be independent, too. You can't give me all I want but I can try to get it. . . . And then, if I go to Pendennis I want Uncle to let me do all that is possible in the orchards and garden—all the grafting and pruning and planting. I am going to be a gardener. If I could I would go to a big school and learn, but I can't do that. Don't you think Uncle will have me? I am awfully strong. I want hard, real work—something that counts, something worth while."

The colour had deepened to a wonderful glow in the girl's face ; her eyes were wide and strangely bright. She had spoken with great rapidity, her voice deepening and quivering, and she stood at last silent and expectant, waiting for a reply.

After some minutes it came.

"Tamsie, is this just the idea of the moment?" said her father.

"No, it isn't, Dad, I've thought of it often. And—and—oh, I may as well tell you. I have been going over in the Park, after the gates are shut, to help Johnson. I was there to-night, preparing a bed. It was raining, and the earth was heavy. I was wet through."

Helen looked up quickly.

"After dark?" she said.

"Yes, Mother."

"Alone with Johnson?"

"Myrtle was there. He sends for her."

"How often have you been?"

"Oh, several times. It is a dear little Park, and so awfully pretty. And Johnson has taught me a lot about planting and about soils. He takes an immense pride in it all."

"Is Myrtle always there?"

"Oh, yes; she looks on while I work. It amuses her. But I want to know what Dad thinks of my plan."

"Why do you choose gardening?" asked Dr. Latimer, after a moment.

"Oh, I don't know. I just love it."

"It is very hard work and very tiring. Come and sit down. . . . Now listen! What will your mother do if you go?"

"She will be unselfish," said Thomasine, "and I shall be selfish—from a certain point of view."

"And if you stay here and help her?"

"I shall be unselfish, then."

"But if your staying is necessary for the time? If you are wanted to do your share of good for the family?"

Thomasine put up her hand with a little womanly gesture and touched her hair.

"Listen, Dad! That sort of thing is jargon. For, you see, I could not help being born—I am not responsible. All I have to do is to get my own living without being a burden, and to look after the next generation."

"Is that a nice thing to say, Tamsie?"

Thomasine leaned over and kissed him.

"No, darling, but it seems to be the truth, though not very well expressed. And, about Pen-dennis?"

"I will tell you to-morrow."

"No, tell me now."

"To-morrow, dear."

"Oh, I shan't be able to sleep. To-morrow is so far away. I can't bear waiting."

He smiled, and touched her cheek with his hand.

"Ah, Tamsie, you will have much waiting to do in life, my little girl," he said.

## CHAPTER III

DR. LATIMER sat in the depths of his red-velvet chair, though Helen had long since gone up to bed, leaving him with the wifely injunction not to sit up late—"especially as you had hardly any sleep last night, Dick, and you may get another call, so you must rest when you can."

"I'm not tired," he told her, "and I want to think."

"About Tamsie?" she asked shrewdly; "you can do that in bed."

"Yes, presently. I will come up in good time," he said.

Yet he still sat on, though the little clock in the exact centre of the mantelshelf showed that it was almost midnight.

He sat with his legs outstretched, his right arm on the arm of his chair, his chin between his forefinger and his thumb, his eyes, dark brown and entirely unlike those of his daughter, full of thought and a trifle weary.

For after making full allowance for Tamsie's youthfulness, and therefore for her ignorance, he acknowledged to himself that she was more than a trifle arrogant, outspoken, and hard. She had shown him that she possessed not only a mind of her own, which, indeed, he had known before—but

also that she had her own point of view, which seemed to her more desirable than any other, and absolutely correct. What she had said amounted to this: she desired no humdrum existence in her own home, but a career—work, play, money.

She considered it selfishness on the part of her parents when they asked her to wait awhile, to mark time with them, to help; and more than that, she had intimated that they had no right to demand any service from her, for "daughters are not born to save expenses," she had said in her arrogance.

And yet, in a way, she was right. She had to live her life. It certainly did seem unfair to lay upon the shoulders of the only daughter any of the burden of the education of the sons.

Yet it was done. In every family where there were sons they came first, they had the greatest consideration. And so many of the daughters were content that this should be so. Thomasine had said many other things that night before she had gone up to her room.

"You have no right to do so much for the boys that there is nothing for me," she had said. "It should be the other way about, for it is so much harder for girls to make a living. There are so many of you," she had added, with sudden passion, "who think that we can be content at home till some man comes to marry us. But we are not content. The good things in the world belong as much to the girls as to the boys. It is not fair to give us the scraps while they have the best. And we girls who have no money, what happens when we marry? We go from drudgery

in one home to drudgery in another, and are tied down more than ever we were."

He remembered Helen's quick expostulation here. But they had let the girl continue.

"It is all right if there is money," she had said. "I don't mean wealth, but money for the jolly things, and money to make one independent of the man one marries, or, in case one does not marry, money to keep one out of trouble. And if you cannot give it me you should ask no service of me, but let me have time to earn it for myself. And oh!" (here the young voice had trembled), "I would give you much loving service unasked when the other work is done."

"But, Tamsie," he had said, "we want you at home now."

"For what?" she had returned. "To save money for the boys. They are my brothers, but can I help that? They are your children, and while you are here you are responsible. And besides"—she had gone on quickly, for he had looked up here very steadily, and she had not been able to meet the regard of his eyes.

He was glad now as he remembered this, for he knew that she had also felt the cruelty of her words.

"And, besides, what can I do?" she had asked, "what can I do in the house?"

"You can learn to cook and mend, and help make the beds, and keep the rooms tidy," Helen had said, and there had been an edge to her voice. "There is not such a great deal of it in the term-time, only the holidays would be busy."

"And make my own clothes or wear my old ones, and wear cobbled shoes, and last year's hats.

And have no theatre tickets, nor frocks fit to wear in the evenings."

There had been scorn in the girl's voice at this. He remembered the shock he had felt as he noticed her beauty. It was radiant, exquisite, with that strength in it that would not outwear. And she must have seen it herself—must have seen it suddenly, unexpectedly, and of that revelation he knew this was the outcome.

And so they had returned again to the early question.

"But what can you do?"

"I have told you. Ask Uncle George, as I said, if he will have me. Explain, or I will explain, what I want. It isn't very much to ask. I will work very hard; I will put up with anything and everything. I will not draw back or give up. I am very strong; you have no idea how strong I am, and I have a very great ambition. Oh, you must see how much I want you to let me go."

"And where will it lead?" he had asked.

"I shall learn at Pendennis by practical experience what I should learn if I went to school. Then I shall find work, and perhaps later I shall go abroad. I want to be a gardener—it is what I am most fit for. And oh, you will be so proud of me when I have succeeded and am doing as well as the boys."

"And Uncle George is to pay you a wage?"

"Yes; a nominal wage at first. Oh, I know something about it even now—I shall not spoil his trees or kill his flowers. Write and ask him. Give me a chance."

"And if you go to him you will leave us and your home. Instead of our care, you will have what you call a career. We would rather have you at home, Tamsie. As you say, you are our only daughter."

"Yes, I know. But I shall come home. There are holidays."

"But you speak of going abroad."

"Oh, not yet—not yet. That will not be for a long time."

"Yet you make it part of your ambition. You will have it for the goal of your hopes. You see yourself on your own fruit-farm, shall we say. You have made a picture of it in your own mind; is that not it?"

"It is a very good picture."

"Yes, very good. We shall see about it in the morning."

She had had to be content with that, but the feeling between the three had been restrained until the girl had gone to bed. She had gone a little defiantly after a hasty good-night, and had left him sitting in his shabby chair by the table, where Helen still sewed with quick fingers and down-bent head.

Now Helen, too, had retired, and he sat alone. He was thinking still of Thomasine, and, below all she had said, he saw the reason, the real reason, of this desire of hers.

He saw, deeper than the arrogance of her youth, her new-found pride in herself; he knew that she had seen for the first time her sudden attainment of beauty, that she had felt her own physical strength, as well as within herself the first stirrings

of her soul, and, therefore, she desired those things which belong to youth and to beauty—those things which mean so much to the girl who has touched with outstretched hands the first budding flowers of her womanhood.

Life to Thomasine meant work through the day and joy at night—colour, change, and full hours. She was of the strong; toil was her pleasure, toil in the open air, the countryside, amongst fruit and flowers. If money was to please her, she must earn it; she must earn, too, her play-time and her sleep.

She was not of those women who reap where others have sown; still less of those women who, too languid to put out their hands to the full-eared grain, must needs sit with the flowers in the shade, and suffer the sheaves to be brought to them and laid within the hollow of their arms.

Of this her father was glad. Yet he knew that his daughter would not work without return, would not sit patiently with quiet hands and wait for good to come thereby to others, as so many women have been forced to do.

Not only because he needed her here in his house, and because her mother needed her, did he regret that she demanded to go. He saw full plainly that for Thomasine there lay much rough walking ahead, and he wished that he could keep her with him till the inevitable happened, and the shadow which lay over his life should close down and separate her from him.

He could not tell her of that shadow yet. He must allow her to develop along the lines she desired. And Thomasine, emancipated, inde-

pendent, would be advised by no man, and a woman walking life alone comes in contact with much that must mar the beauty of her womanhood.

Again he sighed. Thomasine had so much to learn—so many and so difficult were the lessons before her. He stood up at last. He had come to no conclusion but this : that it is more difficult to settle the question of the future for a girl than it is for any boy. And it seemed that Thomasine had become a stranger to himself. She was no longer the same as she had been when she had greeted him in the morning of that same day. She had shown him with startling suddenness new faults in herself, the non-existence of much that he believed her to possess, the growth of her womanhood, still crude but boldly strong.

"She is not a child any longer," he said, as he stretched himself. "I do not seem to know her ; I had not even expected all this new development. . . . Yet I should have expected it. She means what she says ; she will go, and I cannot restrain her or guard her any longer."

He put out the gas and found his way in the darkness from the room. The light still burned in the passage ; he made sure the house door was locked and bolted, extinguished the light there also, and went upstairs. The gentleness of the lines in his face spoke of the gentleness of the soul within, told also that he would ask much of tenderness from others. Yet Thomasine had seemed not only crude, but hard. She seemed to be very far away from him and unassailable. He could not tell how to appeal to her, how to touch her. And, at Pendennis, George would accentuate anything in

her that was hard, for he, the oldest of the brothers, was a man of different manner. He would do harm to Thomasine.

He went up the stairs. His thoughts were not whether Thomasine should have his permission to go—he knew she would go. He was thinking of the girl herself, and of this unexpected development in her character.

The light from the street without shone through the glass above the passage door on the yellow marbled paper of the staircase wall. His shadow went with him as he ascended the stairs with slow steps. Some one, startlingly white, stood above him on the landing where the stairs ended. The yellow light showed him the face of Thomasine, very pale it seemed, with blank hollows, where were her eyes, and a heavy weight of hair all loose about her shoulders.

He went up to her, waiting for her to speak, and so stood a moment looking down on her, noticing as he did so that her eyes were almost on a level with his own. He heard her breathing quickly and unevenly, and some of the dead weight which had been with him as he ascended the stairs fell away. For he knew that she was not so hard, not so utterly without love for him.

"Dad ! "

Her voice was a whisper with a quiver in it of tears. He waited, for he wanted her to give him what she had without his aid. Her arms came about him with a caress almost rough, she held him very closely in a strong embrace, and her face was pressed to his.

"Dad, I *do* love you. I love you more than any one else in the world. I waited to tell you so.

If you had not come up then I should have come down. I shall love you always . . . always."

He held his arms about her; he felt her face was wet with tears and very hot.

"I was rude and rough to you," she said. "I did not mean to hurt you or make you vexed. You aren't vexed, are you?"

"No, dear, no. I knew you were not considering how you said it all. We will talk of it to-morrow. Good-night."

She lay a moment against him. "Good-night," she said, "I will go back to bed. Forget I was horrid. Remember I love you."

He kissed her brow between her eyes. A bell whirled sharply in a room behind them as he released her.

"Night bell," he said gently. "I must go down to the door."

"Oh, you will have to go out! It is such a shame; you were out last night. You never get any sleep."

"It's all in the day's work," he answered. "Good-night, Tamsie. You have made me very happy."

He ran lightly down the stairs to the door, unlocked it and drew the bolts. Followed a brief colloquy with some one on the steps outside.

He looked up as he retraced his steps down the passage to the door of his surgery. Thomasine was leaning over the banisters, looking down; he motioned to her to join him.

"What is it?" she asked, close at his side before he had time to light the gas-jet over the big, untidy desk which stood by the window.

"An accident," he answered, quickly putting into

a bag the things he would need. "I shall be away a long time, I expect. The messenger was Tom Arnold, from Mrs. Barrow's."

"Dad! *Who* is hurt?"

"Jeanette," he answered. "Tell your mother where I am gone. I shall not be back until everything possible has been done."

He closed his bag. The snap of the lock sounded clear and metallic in the sudden silence which fell over the room. Thomasine's eyes had dilated, the flames of yellow about the black pupils shone with strange brilliancy.

"Jeanette!" she said at last, and her breath came quickly as though she had been running fast and far. "How do you know it is serious?" she said.

"Tom told me. Give me my coat and remember to tell your mother if I am not back by breakfast time. Go back to bed, Tamsie; I can't tell you anything until I return."

He caught up his bag and hat. She asked him no further question, neither did she delay him by any attempt to button his coat. She ran before him down the darkened passage and opened the heavy door.

Tom had gone. The little garden outside and the length of gas-lit avenue alike were empty, and no sound of footfall came from the pavement.

Dr. Latimer hurried out into the quietness. Thomasine listened at the half-opened door, watching with wide, unseeing eyes the flickering of the leaves which the street lamp threw from the tree by the gate. The rain had ceased to fall; the path and the pavements were dry. A tiny crescent moon swung low in the sky over the Park. . . .

The girl closed the heavy door and, in the darkness of the passage, turned the key in the lock, but left the bolts unfastened so that her father might enter when he returned.

She went back to the surgery at the end of the passage and pushed open the swing baize-covered door. The sickly smell of drugs which met her filled her, as it did always, with a sense of repugnance, which amounted at this moment to a feeling of nausea.

Jeanette had had an accident ! Jeanette was hurt, crushed, perhaps dying, perhaps dead. And only yesterday morning—*only yesterday morning*—she, Thomasine, had been with Jeanette lying on the short grass of the golf-links at Mount Batten, looking out over the sea.

Thomasine extinguished the light, went back to the stairs, and slowly up to her room, closing the door after her. She sat down on the edge of the bed and ordered her thoughts so that she might realize this that had happened in such a few short hours.

For Jeanette as she lay on the grass had said : " I am seventeen, nearly eighteen, Tamsie—one month younger than you. And I shall put up my hair on my eighteenth birthday, and in the evening my mother will give a dance at the Assembly Rooms, and of course you will be there. She has promised that I shall choose my gift, and I can have what I like. What shall I choose, Tamsie ? "

Thomasine remembered it all, every word, every look, every note of colour. And she was glad that not then or at any time had she envied Jeanette.

" I think I will choose pearls," Jeanette had

said. "I will ask her for pearls. What would you wish for if you might choose?"

And Thomasine had stared across the pale, smooth sea, wondering what she should choose, and had not been able to decide.

"You should wear a great fire-opal low on your brow between your eyes," Jeanette had said. "Or you should wear a fine line of topaz across your hair—yellow, to match the flame in your eyes. Or emeralds, Tamsie, but never pearls. . . ."

"And I shall wear a white chiffon frock embroidered with pearls at my dance on my birthday night. . . . And silver shoes. . . . All the rooms shall be full of pink roses—very pale pink roses. . . . What shall you wear, Tamsie?"

Thomasine sat on the bed and stared at the pale squares of glass in the window before her. Little Jeanette! Had she, too, been looking ahead at the opening vista of womanhood? And it had seemed to be full of roses—pink ones and very pale—and of pearls, chiffon frocks, and little silver shoes.

Jeanette, who had stretched out her hands for these things which she desired of life! What had happened to her? What had happened in the space of half a day and an hour or two of night?

Thomasine shivered. She turned and sprang into the bed, crouching under the clothes, trembling, her fingers gripping the pillow.

"'In the midst of life we are in death,'" she said to herself half-audibly, and instantly started up, thinking some voice in the room had spoken. Then, crouching again under the clothes, she prayed desperately to God for little Jeanette.

## CHAPTER IV.

THOMASINE awoke as the first grey light of dawn was filtering into her little room. She awoke at once, fully conscious, and without any of the groping after thought and understanding with which some people awaken. She remembered instantly what had happened to Jeanette, and, obeying an impulse, she arose at once to dress. She coiled her hair lightly above her head, slipped her feet into their slippers, and went out, shivering a little—for it was a cold morning—to the bathroom, where the shock of the cold water against her body brought her spirits up from their unwonted despondency to an altitude of cheerfulness.

She rubbed herself dry, with a towel of great size and roughness—a huge brown towel with aggressive scarlet ends—and as her skin glowed warm and pink her spirits rose still more. She whistled cheerily to herself, and went through her daily five minutes' drill with an easy zest, for Thomasine had taken a wholesome pride in her body all the years of her young life. Later, white-clad before her mirror as she brushed and coiled and pinned her hair, there came to her a steadfast idea that Jeanette could not be much hurt, for "God could not be so cruel."

Thomasine worried very little about the good of her soul. It was enough for her to see to the good of her body, which, indeed, appeared far more important. Yet deep below all that part of her which was easy to grasp lay a very child-like faith in the goodness of God, and in the ultimate happiness which must end all undertakings.

"Things come out all right in the end," Thomasine would say, lightly dismissing the matter.

But, as she finished dressing her hair, her shrill blackbird whistling (which showed how much of the child there was still in her nature) ceased abruptly. Some one had opened the front door and had come into the house.

She caught her dressing-gown from its hook behind her door, and, thrusting her arms into it, buttoned it hastily as she hurried downstairs. Her father was already in his surgery, and she went to him, her eyes scanning his tired face, which seemed to her so white and worn in that early light.

"Dad! Is she alive?"

That was the first question.

"Yes, dear."

His voice told her that that was all. Jeanette was alive, but sick unto death.

"Then I will make you some coffee," she said; "you look terribly tired. You shall tell me presently."

He put out his hands and met, as always, her ready grip. He drew her to him, and kissed her brow between her eyes.

"You are grown up, Tamsie," he said, with a little gentle smile. "I shall be glad of the coffee, my dear."

She left him and went to the kitchen, and presently the grateful aroma of hot coffee, freshly made, preceded her into the surgery, where she found him standing by the window, rapidly turning the leaves of one of his shabby medical books.

Thomasine waited while he ate and drank; she stood leaning against the frame of the window looking out at the brick wall which bounded the narrow path and so shut off the view of the premises of their neighbour. The pale light deepened and brightened; a glow, not of sunshine, but yet of the sun, warmed the old red wall, and made of it a note of comfort to the girl's uneasy soul. Some sparrows fluttered down to the narrow path . . . a moment later she heard her father place his empty cup on the desk. She turned at once.

"Tell me," she said, and he told her.

"After lunch, yesterday, Nicholas Rees came and asked Jeanette to go with him and his sister, Mrs. Wane, for a run on the moors. Of course, she went. They arranged to get back before dark. Mrs. Barrow asked them to be home by seven o'clock, at any rate, and they—Rees and Mrs. Wane—were to dine with her. They did not come at seven o'clock. They did not get back until after ten. They had had an accident. Somewhere on the hills the brakes slipped, and the car dashed off the road over the bank on to the moor, where it overturned. Rees was thrown fairly clear, and Mrs. Wane was not badly hurt, but Jeanette

fell against some stones, and was unconscious for several minutes. Well, they had to get help to lift the car, which was little damaged. In fact, Rees put it right for the drive back. It was more than seven o'clock by the time they started. Jeanette, they say, was very pale and quiet, but not complaining. She got out of the car when at last they reached home, and walked into the house without any help. Five minutes afterwards she collapsed. She was unconscious when I got there. She is only slightly bruised. In fact, Mrs. Wane is more bruised than Jeanette."

"But what is it?" Thomasine asked.

"Paralysis," he answered.

Thomasine's face whitened. She stared at her father. He looked beyond her straight before him at the warm red wall outside the window.

"Her head is injured," he said. "There is some pressure on the brain. I cannot say yet how great is the injury, but I am going back presently. We are wiring for a specialist, too, of course. She is still unconscious, as she has been since she collapsed."

Thomasine still stared at him without finding any word or sound to break the intensity of her silence. Her mind was numb from this blow, numb and dead. . . . But suddenly she seemed to realize that it was Jeanette of whom her father spoke—Jeanette who was paralysed. She swayed, and her fingers gripped the woodwork of the window. Sound broke from her in a little inarticulate cry of horror. Then came words.

"Oh, I must go to her—I must go to her." She felt her father's hand gripping hers, but her

own fingers were passive. She heard his voice speaking to her from an immense distance.

"Tamsie ! . . . Steady now !"

She did not go to him and cling to him and weep, but at the words she straightened herself, and her hand tightened in his. She blinked, and looked at him with steady eyes.

"You will let me go to her, Dad," she said, and her voice was normal.

"Not yet," he replied. "There is no place for you with her yet. Later on she will want you. Wait until I give you the word."

"Yes, Dad."

The man understood this girl of his. He saw there was that in her which could make for strength and courage and sanity; since her babyhood he had harped at critical moments on this string. For Thomasine, whom last night he had not seemed to know, was still the girl whom he had studied for so long, and, though she had shown him new traits in her character, yet must she still possess that one great trait which had welded the bond between them.

For Thomasine loved colour—colour in words, in thought, in action. It was Thomasine who had said, "I will never cry out when I am hurt," and had immediately seen herself standing, with unflinchingly steadfast mien, like a rock against every blow of Fate. Dr. Latimer had seen this in her, and he knew that she would be brave, because she could not see herself a coward; she would be fine, she would be patient, because, in her assurance, she could not imagine herself otherwise.

Therefore he knew that to Thomasine he must

speak with the curt note of authority in his voice; he must help her with the grip that passes between man and man; he must depict herself to herself with quick, bold strokes.

"Wait until I give you the word," he said, and in her mind she saw herself standing patiently, holding herself in, until the barrier was removed, and she went forth to help her friend.

There was nothing morbid in the girl's mind with reference to Jeanette. Her imagination had been made a tower of strength for her; she saw not Jeanette ill and helpless, but Jeanette for whose sake she, Thomasine, must wait patiently.

"I will wait until you give me the word," she said, standing erect, as though she gave her parole. Her eyes met her father's for an instant, as though in salute. . . . "And you—you will go to bed now and rest?"

"Oh no, it is too late. I will go up and get a bath and a shave, and then have breakfast and go on my earlier rounds, so that I may be free to go back to Jeanette."

He put the book he had been holding back on the shelves, and went to the door. Thomasine followed him. He knew she had had a shock; he knew also that, because he understood this which was characteristic in her, this shock would pass over her harmlessly. Yet he felt she needed him—his company, his comradeship—for she loved Jeanette.

"Will you drive for me?" he asked, as she followed him through the door.

"Yes, Dad," she answered, and nodded.

She was awaiting him when he came out of the house a brief two hours later, sitting very erectly in the dogcart, which she had brought up with a dash under the brown-gold trees of the avenue and the Park. He glanced up at her, and almost, he smiled.

The girl was so flagrantly a *poseuse*—at any rate to him, for he knew her. She sat with the reins in her gloved hand, the whip at exactly the correct angle, the dull yellow of her knitted coat and cap toning (as she well knew) with the autumn colouring of the trees.

She looked at him and smiled, saluting him with her whip, and, when he had got up by her side, she drove off rapidly under the trees to the wide, level road above, fully conscious, as he knew, of the admiring and envious glances of the passers-by who were—so many of them—hurrying to their stuffy offices and shops, to their buying and selling.

She drove somewhat recklessly, but with dash and style. He could not but feel that she was, as she imagined, a gay and gallant figure with skilful hands.

She drew up at the house of his first visit, and sat motionless while he went within. The pale, shimmering blue of the October sky, the fresh, keen air, the quick steps of the passers-by, the glances which were cast at her sitting there, warmed the girl so that the colour in her cheek deepened and stung.

The yellow tan of cap and coat deepened the yellow flame in her eyes, just as the old green dressing-gown had shown the grey of them to be not pure grey, but tinged with green. Catkin

eyes, as Jeanette had called them—Jeanette, whose imagination was full of pretty fancies.

Then, as her father joined her, she swung off again along the level width of the Plain, stopping once while the doctor went in at the door by the side of a milliner's shop, and then up the incline past the prison to the hospital. Here Thomasine looked out from her seat across the trees which bordered the downward slope of the road, across the lower part of the town, over which lay a pearly haze, across the Cattewater to the great gold headland of Batten, where she had sat but yesterday, with Jeanette, between the golf-links and the sea. She could not, when she thought of Jeanette, unravel her feelings of this thing that had happened. It could not be true. God, on this wonderful morning of gold and blue and pearl, could not be so cruel. Why, only yesterday she, Jeanette, had said that she would wear at her dance a chiffon frock and silver shoes. Silver shoes! . . . Thomasine knew what was meant by that terrible word "paralysis."

"She will get well," said Thomasine. "Of course she will. I shall go to her and see her through."

She flicked the horse with the end of the whip, and suddenly drew a long sigh. For the world was fair, and she was young, and there was her career. She was to go to Pendennis to dig and root in the damp, brown earth, to toil through the days of blue haze, of frost, and wind, and rain, to prepare herself for the battle with life, in which she was to win those things she so desired. "For as I am a woman," said Thomasine, "I must have

what I want. And I do not want any, one to give it me—I must earn it for myself."

She tilted her head, and sat looking over the town to the headland beyond ; the long wall which crossed it on its summit stood out clearly, a thin, dark line against the blue.

"I will go up there this afternoon," she said, "right at the top. And I will write to Uncle George."

Her father came out from the hospital and joined her. She noted, as he got into the cart, that he looked white and worn and very tired.

"Dad," she said quickly, "you are awfully fagged. I wish I could do some of the rounds for you."

"I am tired," he confessed. "But it is not only that." He looked at her, at the commiseration in her eyes.

"The pain in the world," he said. "One can do so little."

Pain in a world under that blue sky, amongst those golden trees !

"I cannot realize those things," she said.

"I know you cannot," he answered. "Yes, drive down to the Lipson Road."

"You have seen pain often," he said, a little thoughtfully, "but you have not suffered yourself."

"Am I to suffer too?" she asked.

"Yes, child, yes. I hope you will."

"You hope so, father?" She slackened the pace at the corner and looked at him. "You hope so?" she said again.

"Tamsie, I will tell you a theory I have when I have leisure. Remind me to tell you."

She drove rapidly up the Lipson Road, and stopped at the number he gave her.

"I shall not be long here," he said, and went in.

She sat thoughtfully flicking the whip. One part of her brain was busy with a knot loosely tied in the lash of the whip—could it be untied by flicking? The other part dwelt on what her father had said.

"An alley off Ebrington Street," he said, when he came out, "I am not sure of the number. I'll tell you where to stop."

She drove back as he directed, and so turned into a narrow street, shabby with old houses, dingy with cracked paint, with dirty windows and little, neglected, weed-grown gardens.

"Here," he said, and she drew up.

She sat waiting for him as the minutes passed. He was a long time. A thin cat came along the pavement and went into the neglected square of ragged grass. It curled up there in the sunlight and slept. . . .

A woman, her hair in curling-pins, her face unwashed, her person but half-dressed, passed by, carrying a cracked jug. The jug had a spray of apple-blossom on its white-glazed surface.

Some children commenced a gutter game close by the horse. Thomasine watched them and something of her joy in the morning died.

"These are horrid people," said Thomasine, "dirty, untidy people. I should hate to be one of them. I wonder what on earth they do with their drab lives."

Some one opened the door of the house which her father had entered. A tall youth came out to

her. He was collarless and very much unwashed ; his blue eyes were dull. He shambled up to her.

" Doctor says, miss, will yer go in to 'im? I'll 'old the 'orse, miss."

" I am to go in to him? " Thomasine repeated. She sprang down from the cart.

" Don't touch the horse as long as he is quiet," she said. " He will stand."

She went through the gateway to the door, pushed it open, and entered a narrow passage, warm and stuffy. Her father's voice called her from upstairs ; she saw him looking down at her over the banisters.

" Come up," he said. " Quietly."

She went up the narrow, uncovered stairs and joined him. A loose board creaked under her feet, gaudy paper hung loosely from the low walls, the small window was dusty and close shut. Her father beckoned ; she followed him into a room at one side.

It was a small room, warm also, and full of odour. It contained some shabby furniture and a great bed. The bed, once a four-poster, had now a short stump at either corner where the posts had been partly broken, partly sawn off, and it was covered with a patchwork quilt, underneath which some one lay and tossed restlessly.

It was a brilliant quilt. Thomasine saw it and all its glory at one glance. The scarlet and purple and green, the yellow and pink and blue of its colouring stood out in that dingy room almost with dazzling brilliance.

Then the girl looked at the face on the pillow, and at the same moment came her father's voice and held her attention.

## CHAPTER V

"THOMASINE," he said, "this poor soul is in very great trouble. She is delirious. I want you to stay here with her until I send the nurse. There is nothing to do but watch her and prevent her from harming herself. The nurse will be here very shortly, but I have to meet the specialist at three o'clock, and I have a great deal to do."

"But——" Thomasine began a little doubtfully. The woman in the bed turned sharply from side to side and began to babble incoherently and very rapidly in a hoarse, whispering voice.

"I leave her with you, Tamsie," said the doctor, in his voice that note of authority which placed the girl at once on guard. She straightened herself a little and looked up.

"Yes, Dad," she said.

He smoothed the bed-clothes, pulled the quilt up and tucked it in, nodded to his daughter, and went out.

Thomasine heard him go down the creaking stairs, heard the horse turned and driven away, and then the woman's voice rose from a whisper to a scream of rapid words.

"Curse him! Curse him!" she cried, her thin hands tearing at the quilt. "Oh, Mar'gey, my little girl, my baby! Oh, you brute, let her be. . . . Oh, Mar'gey, come back."

The thin, twisted hands tore at the quilt. Thomasine looked at the white face on the pillow, all distorted with grief and illness and terror. The dark, rolling eyes met hers, wavered, and held.

"You . . . you. . . ."

Thomasine bent down and took both hands in her own.

"Mar'gey will come back," she said, with inexpressible gentleness. "He will not hurt her."

"No, no, not now." The woman lay still, staring up at the girl's face. The wrinkled lids dropped over the reddened, dark eyes.

"Tell me," said Thomasine. "Shall I go and find her for you? She doesn't know you are ill or she would come."

"Come? No, no, she'll never come to me again, but I will go to 'er. See here what I did." She raised her head so that Thomasine saw her throat was bound round with a cloth, and on the cloth was a stain of red.

"I did that," the woman said exultingly. "I was here in bed, where I bin lying ill, when 'Erbert came in an' told me they found Mar'gey under the Pier. My Mar'gey! Do you hear? She who was my baby, my little gel—who went a-courting with that blackguard who deceived 'er and tricked 'er and lied to 'er—God curse 'im—an' so sent 'er back here to me. In 'er third month she was when she came back. 'Mother,' she says, 'what shall I do?' And 'Erbert told 'er to get out of the 'ouse, and struck at 'er while I lay 'ere a-bed. 'Erbert, an' 'e my son!"

Her voice rose again in a torrent of evil words. Thomasine still held the quivering hands, but she

could find nothing with which to stem the tide. She bent low suddenly, and her lips touched the heavy lines between the drawn grey brows. . . . The tossing head lay still, the screaming voice sank to a whispering babble of incoherence and, listening attentively, the girl made out some of the words.

"You, Mar'gey, my pretty . . . eh, but it's a fine quilt . . . made it for me to lie under? . . . bury me in it . . . Mar'gey, don't go with 'im . . . listen to what I say. . . . 'Erbert struck you, did 'e? . . . 'Erbert! . . . I'll show 'im when I can walk again . . . under the Pier 'e says you be . . . come back to me an' sleep . . . 'tis main warm under the quilt you made. . . ."

Thomasine held the two hands still and they clung to her in a convulsive grip. She felt no sense of horror as the story unfolded, no sense of disgust—only something in her throat ached and hindered speech.

"You are very tired," she said, after a time. "You will sleep now. And something shall be done to help you."

The heavy lines between the brows relaxed, the gaunt face lost something of its terror and pain. Thomasine slipped one hand under the grizzled head and laid it more easily on the pillow. Of sympathy, pity, and womanly understanding the girl held great store. Her hands were cool and strong, her voice insistent.

"Sleep," she said, and her voice crooned. "Sleep under Mar'gey's pretty quilt. It is warm and you are tired. . . . You have not slept for so long. . . . And in your dreams Mar'gey will come to you just as she used to do. . . ."

The door of the room was pushed open, the nurse, newly arrived, stood there listening. The woman in the bed lay still and quiet; her voice trailed off into sighs. Exhausted, worn out, she slept.

Thomasine looked up and saw the nurse. She smiled and nodded, asking with her eyes for silence. The nurse came into the room, and gradually Thomasine withdrew her hands. She stood there a moment looking down at the sleeping face, and a sentence of her father's was in her mind.

"The pain in the world," he had said.

"But I cannot realize it," she had answered.

"I hope you will suffer," he had said.

Something strange seemed to have touched her while she had ministered to the woman—to this mother twice bereft of her child, this mother who had cursed her own son, who had tried to die by her own hands. Crude pain and trouble, life evil and soiled, lurked here in this shabby, dirty room. This woman, who lay asleep under the gay colours of her quilt, knew what Thomasine did not know.

"I hope you will suffer," her father had said. Why?

"I hope I shall suffer," said Thomasine to herself. "But I shall not cry out when I am hurt."

Then arrogance itself broke down for one instant.

"I will try not to cry out," said Thomasine.

She turned to the nurse and whispered.

"I must go back," she said; "but I will come again. Is there anything more I can do before I go?"

"No, Miss Latimer. She is nicely asleep. You

have good hands, you know. You should be one of us."

Thomasine lifted her hands and looked at them—long and brown, the fingers longer than the palms, but spatulate rather than tapering. She dropped them and looked again at the bed.

"Well, I will go," she whispered after a pause. "But I will come again. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

She went from the room and down the creaking stairs. The unwashed boy with the vacant blue eyes was lounging at the door, whistling.

"Get out of the house," said Thomasine, coming abruptly upon him, "making a noise like that!"

"Eh?" said the boy, surprised.

"Get out of the house and get out of the way. No, put your hands down. Hurry up! I want to shut the door."

"Shut it, then," he said surlily, moving away.

"Shut it, then, yellor eyes! I can open it again."

"You go back to that house again and make a disturbance, or any sort of noise, and I will give you in charge. You coward!"

She shut the door.

"Go and find something to do," she said. "Remember, I am coming back."

She went out of the gate, waited for him to follow and shut it behind her. Then, turning her back on him, she walked rapidly up the street, her hands deep in the pockets of her coat, her black brows meeting in a frowning line.

The pain in the world! Physical pain, mental pain, the pain of poverty and helplessness. These drab people—these neglected children! Could not

a woman do something—something worth while, something that would count?

But there was Pendennis and her career—her mind turned quickly to brighter thoughts. It was nothing to her that these people suffered.

“How can I help it?” said Thomasine, striding up the street. “And Jeanette, too! . . . But she will have every attention. She will, she must get well.”

Then she remembered that her voice and touch had soothed the woman to sleep.

“You have good hands,” the nurse had said approvingly. “You should be one of us.”

Thomasine looked at her hands again.

“Oh, well,” she said, as though to silence some thought in her mind, “I can do things, of course. Lift and carry, soothe the sick, and fight the bullies, and dig in a garden, and prune young trees.”

Again the full tide of vitality swept through her veins. She looked up at the shimmering blue of the sky.

“Life,” said Thomasine, trying to express her feeling. “These things make one fit for Life.”

She exulted as she walked. Her mother looked up from her sewing as the girl swung open the sitting-room door and came, light-foot, into the room.

“Sewing still!” Thomasine cried. She felt a sense of injury. “Do put it away and go out. It is perfectly glorious this morning.”

“So your father says. He has left a special message for you to take to Mrs. Forrest this afternoon. He has not time to go himself.”

“Oh,” Thomasine looked at her mother thought-

fully. "He won't want Toby this afternoon, because he is going to see Jeanette with the specialist. Well, then, I'll go and tell Parkins we shall drive—you and I, eh, Mother?"

"Do you think we might?" Helen looked up, with eager blue eyes.

"Rather! Why not? I shall have to walk if you don't come. You will come, though, won't you, Mother?"

"I shall like it very much. Your father won't be back again this morning. He will leave Toby at the Mews, and get what lunch he can. He is very busy. What have you been doing?"

"Oh, looking after some woman in some dirty little street. I'll tell you about it." And straight-way Thomasine related the story.

"It is Mrs. Warren," Helen said slowly. "It is desperately sad. Your father did think of trying to get her in at Dyleshart, but she wouldn't go because of her daughter."

"Mar'gey could have gone, too."

"She refused. She had some idea—like many others, by the way—that Dyleshart is a religious community. Of course, it is not—not in that sense. At any rate, as the girl wouldn't go, the mother wouldn't. She is almost bedridden with rheumatism, but she does some sewing for the shops. Perhaps she will go now that the daughter is dead."

"Mother, look here," Thomasine broke in sharply. "Why are these things allowed? Here was a brave woman doing the best she could, keeping herself and her boy—a great idle brute—out of the workhouse, living in that dirty old house, ill and poor. The only thing she loved

was this girl, and the girl drowned herself under the Pier because she trusted some man. Why? Why do these things happen? God can't have meant it. He isn't cruel. Very well, then, it must be our own fault. How is it our fault? What can we do? "

Helen folded her work with hands that trembled. She saw that Thomasine's face had grown hard and sharp, that her strange eyes blazed.

"You can't answer," went on the passionate voice. "You don't know what to do because of these things—the pain in the world. . . . It is cruel. It is a needless shame. The thought of it disturbs me. It is underneath all my pleasure. This is the second horrible thing to-day, and it is a glorious day, all blue and gold. I cannot have these things disturbing me."

There was a pause. Thomasine breathed quickly; her fingers were restless.

"I am glad these things disturb you," Helen said at last.

"Glad!"

"Yes, very glad, for sometimes I have thought your sympathies have no depth. If you think these things are cruel, why don't you do something to make them less so—to try and prevent trouble and pain? You could do a great deal—it is a woman's work, and always has been." She broke off, turning away from the table. Thomasine stood there staring at her. But she said nothing. Thomasine turned abruptly on her heel.

"Oh, well," she said, uneasily as a boy caught in a moment of sentiment, "I will go down to the Mews and tell Parkins about Toby. So long!"

She went out whistling softly, to show how little she cared.

"I hope you will suffer," her father had said.

"I am glad these things disturb you," her mother had remarked.

"I don't want to be sad," said Thomasine restlessly. "It is a dear, warm world. Why shouldn't I—we—have a perfectly happy life? I shall ask Dad what he meant."

"I say, Mother," she remarked, as they swung along the road that afternoon, "you won't really mind my going to Pendennis?"

"Do you still want to go?" Helen asked. Her eyes were bright, her cheeks pink. She looked young and fragile by the side of this big daughter of hers.

"Still want to go? Why, of course."

"But don't you see what a lot you can do at home? I want you, your father wants you, Malcolm wants you when he has Latin to do in the evenings. Jeanette will want you."

"Jeanette won't. She will have her nurses and her mother. Besides, she will soon be well. And—oh, don't you see?—it is a luxury for you to have a grown-up daughter at home."

"It is nothing of the kind. Besides, why shouldn't we have luxuries? Your place is with us."

"Oh, let's drop it. We shall spoil our drive. Look at those trees—aren't they gorgeous? We will come back by the Plym, shall we? The woods will be lovely by the Bridge."

Mrs. Latimer allowed the subject to be turned. "Very well," she said, "just as you like."

Thomasine relapsed into silence, which presently she broke by a gay, tuneful whistling. The trees indeed were gorgeous, and, later, as they drove back by the woods in the valley, taking the long way round because of the glory of the short day, the brown and gold of the trees, their dark trunks rising up from the feathery yellow undergrowth by the side of the roads, the musical falling of the river over the stones above the bridge, smote Thomasine with such pleasure, that it passed the border line and became pain. Leaves were falling slowly, carpeting the road ; myriads of beech-nuts crackled as the wheels passed over them ; chest-nuts lay bursting out of their prickly green sheaths.

A great silence brooded over the woods which the sound of the river but deepened ; a blue haze shimmered over the hills above the bridge ; a suggestion of mist veiled the meadow where the woods separated to left and right. Tall grasses grew in the meadow, branches of yellow bracken edged the water, and the girl's keen eyes saw the orange seeds of the iris displayed amongst the reeds on the farther banks. She drew up the horse and sat with slackened hands. The rich, still beauty of the river and wood and sky called to her. It drew her as the scent of the freshly turned earth had drawn her the night before, it made her throat ache, it quickened her pulse, it appealed to the inmost unknown soul of her.

She felt a wild longing to get down on the earth, to press her lips to it, to cry aloud to the glory of the world, to shout till the hills echoed, till the voice of the river was lost. But the barriers of reserve and control which her father had built

up were not always easily broken down ; only the surge of joy, of life within her, swept over her, and left her exulting.

She drove on again slowly under the trees. The road wound upwards steeply, and still she watched and drank of the full cup. At last she turned to her mother.

"Why do people live in towns?" she said, "poor people? Why don't they live here in little huts, and get a living out of the earth?"

Helen smiled.

"Once," she said, "there was a man who asked why the towns were not built in the country. He loved the country, too."

Thomasine laughed suddenly, and whipped up the horse.

"Oh, I am a fool!" she said. "But these things appeal to me. It is in the blood, I suppose, and that is why I want to go to Pendennis."

"Then it is not merely to get away from us that you want to go? Not to sell your birthright for a will-o'-the-wisp career? Not only to make money for clothes and pleasure?"

"No, it is not to get away from you. I wish you and Dad could come also. Yes, I want a career. I want clothes, too—such as these, for instance: a leather motor-coat, Mother; a white jersey and cap for a tiny sailing-boat; clothes for golf; tweeds for the moors, and all the dear things one does in such clothes."

"My dear, you won't get all that out of gardening."

"Won't I? I'll be some one's steward some day. I'll have heaps of work and a big estate.

And then you and Dad will come and live with me in my own house, and be sorry you tried to keep me back in the beginning. Mother, let's picture the house! Diamond panes in the windows and big window seats; a long, low living-room with Jacobean furniture, a great open fireplace, and a moulded ceiling—and an old oak rafter carved at the edge. . . . Oh, God!"

"Tamsie!"

The girl's voice had sunk to a low, intense note; she struck her hand fiercely on her knee.

"I want these things, Mother; I must have them. I will work at anything that will give them to me. I am full of ambition. I am awfully strong. I am modern right through me—as much man as woman when it comes to a fight. Mother, Mother, I can't settle down quietly to the daily round, to an ordinary marriage, to endless little bothers in a house. I want the open sky and the country, and the things I can earn."

"You will find it very difficult—very difficult indeed."

"Well, what of it? I don't want things to be easy. I want to fight. The more difficult it is the more energy I shall put into it."

She stopped abruptly, and there was an instant's pause, then: "Mother, I know what you and Dad meant about my need of suffering. It will draw out my strength—the best that is in me."

"It will show what is in you, Tamsie."

"And there is good in me, isn't there?"

"Yes, of course, but it is not all good." Helen's tone was very matter-of-fact. Thomasine pulled herself up sharply, and laughed.

## 68. THE GENERATION BETWEEN

"No, not all good," she said. "The good die young. I am not ready to die yet."

She whipped up the horse, and whistled as she drove. The light cart swayed a little; Helen swung against the girl's arm. Thomasine looked down at her and smiled radiantly. She suddenly liked having this small, fair figure at her side, the touch of her arm. It made her feel very strong and able to protect—a very gallant figure indeed.

"Nice little mother," she said appreciatively; but because of the arrogance, the conceit which backed them, the words were an insolence.

The street lamps shone like yellow eyes as they came up the hill to Hartley, and rattled down again to the plain of Mannamead below.

Thomasine turned in at their avenue, drove under the trees and pulled up sharply at the door.

"Hot toast for tea, there's a dear," she said. "I shan't be long."

. . . . .

She was sitting in the schoolroom struggling with Malcolm, who had a distaste for Latin, when she heard her father come in after his long day.

"You are awfully stupid, Malcolm," she said. "I've told you the same thing fifty times. You don't put your heart in it."

"Haven't any to put. I hate Latin. You wouldn't do it if you hated it. I'm not going to be a doctor. I'm going in the Navy."

"In the Navy? That will cost too much."

"Well, I'm going. If I have to go on as ship's boy, I'm going. Write an excuse for this Latin,

there's a good sort. Old Wilkins will take anything from you."

"Will he, indeed! I'm sure I shan't write any more excuses for you if that's the case. So you had better buck up. . . . There, that's father; I want to speak to him."

"Oh, wait till he has had some dinner. Doctoring is a rotten job nowadays; let the poor beggar alone. I shall crib this beastly Latin if you won't help me."

"Crib it, then. I've told you and shown you, but what good does it do? Besides, I shan't be here much longer."

"Why? Where are you going?"

"To Pendennis, with Uncle George."

"What on earth for?"

"Oh, I'm going to be a gardener."

"Holy smoke! A gardener! Well, that beats all!"

"Pooh!" said Thomasine; "do you think only men are gardeners these days? Why, you're run out. It is our turn. We shall be in the Army and Navy before long."

"That you won't!"

"We are already. The Army Nursing Corps can camp and ride like any man—better than some."

"Fight, too, I suppose?"

"Yes, when the chance comes. Oh, you needn't laugh. Shut up, and give me that book. . . . Ever hear of the Amazons, Malcolm?"

Malcolm went stolidly on with his Latin in outraged sulkiness.

"I can't think where you get it all from," he said

at last. "You girls seem determined to make fools of yourselves."

"No, you're wrong. We aren't fools. We are betwixt and between. The old way is over, the new way is come. We're bearing the brunt of it. We're the generation between."

"Looks bad for the next lot," he said.

Thomasine laughed. "You're coming on," she said. "All right, I'll stop. Shake hands, Malcolm."

They shook hands, but the boy kept the book. "I'll do it myself," he said.

Thomasine got up, stretching herself.

"You're a fine boy, Malcolm. No, I'm not laughing; I meant what I said. I'm going to find Dad."

## CHAPTER VI

DR. LATIMER was alone when Thomasine came to him. In the shaded yellow light he looked very tired. There was an appearance of depression about his attitude as he sat, his head on his hand, his eyes lost in shadow. Yet, as he looked up at her entrance, Thomasine saw what her mother had seen, the expression of such sweetness, which, allied with the features and the short, clipped beard, gave to the face a resemblance to the face of Christ as the world knows it. So she closed the door gently, and stood by the table looking down at him, and the womanliness in herself came uppermost, so that she said : " I do wish you were not so tired."

He straightened himself at that. " It is only want of sleep," he answered cheerfully. " I am going up to bed almost at once. The day has been a little tiring."

" I wish I could help you," she said.

" You can—you do. Did you wish to see me, Tamsie? "

" Yes, about Jeanette."

" Ah, poor child ! The specialist is very grave about her. He is not able to say more than that her recovery must take a long time—so long that she may never be able to walk again."

" Never—be able—to walk again ! " Thomasine

stood facing her father, her hand resting on the table, as she stooped down a little towards him. Her eyes grew blank, her face sharpened. These cruel things which had come near to her one after the other—surely, they were only fancies. It could not be true that her father had said that Jeanette might never walk again—little Jeanette, who was to dance at the Assembly Rooms in silver shoes.

“He says also”—her father’s voice reached her as she bent over him trying to understand—“he says there must be an operation, but not yet. She is a delicate girl, and we can take no dangerous risks with her. It is her right side, you understand, and because of this pressure on a portion of the brain. We can only hope to partly relieve her, but perhaps in time she will fully recover. No one can say.”

“Oh, it can’t be true! It can’t be true!”

Thomasine was shocked.

“Why, yesterday—only, yesterday, she was with me on the Mount. She was perfectly well—perfectly.”

The doctor looked up quickly.

“It was the accident,” he said, raising his voice a little. “I want you to realize it. I want you to face these things.”

“I am facing it.” The rigidity of her attitude was relaxed. “But it is horrible—horrible! It seems so cruel. Oh, if it were me I would not live—no one could expect me to live like that.”

Her voice vibrated, the yellow light in her eyes blazed out.

“These things are wicked,” she said. “They are needless. They are cruel. What had Jeanette

done to deserve it? It wasn't even any fault of Nick's. Why, Mrs. Barrow said they might go. I don't understand these things. Nick, and Jeanette, and Isobel, and Mrs. Barrow are all being punished for one afternoon of happiness. It is wicked, I tell you. If God allows it He is cruel."

The words came rapidly, with a quiver that hinted at the throb of tears. The doctor put out his hand to the girl.

"Tamsie, sit down," he said; "I want to talk to you."

She sat down, leaning forward in the chair, her hands knotted, her brow frowning. Her father watched her. He began to speak with a slow deliberation, driving home a message which he hoped would shield her all her life long.

"Tamsie, you remember I said to you to-day that I hoped you would suffer in your life. Well, if I wish that for my daughter, believing it to be good, shall I deny it to any one—to Jeanette? For this is my theory, and I want you to believe in it and remember it, for, if you do, if you accept it as a steadfast truth, nothing will ever come to you that can harm you."

He moved, and his eyes dwelt on hers; he raised his voice so that, low as it was even then, it seemed insistent, dominant, strong.

"I believe," he said, "that all suffering which has not resulted from any known fault, which has unavoidably come to us, is sent from God for a very perfect reason. I believe that we must learn patience without any outcry, must learn to obey that most difficult of all orders—to wait.

Ah, Thomasine," his voice changed a little, "we can all of us act—some of us can act well—but how few of us can lie still and endure with utmost patience? It is so perfectly easy to be brave, to be good when you have never had any great trouble, any terrible temptation. But there is no credit in that."

"It will be awfully hard for her," Thomasine said.

"Yes, terribly hard. Tamsie, come here"—he rose as she approached him. He put his hands on her shoulders and looked down at her ardent face, where the eyes now gleamed bright and hard, like points of steel. "When your turn comes," he said in a deep, low voice, "whatever it is you are called upon in your life to bear, you must bear it, child. Make no outcry, keep it to yourself as far as you can, stand on guard over your own soul, and wait with the utmost patience. Bear it all, Tamsie, endure it all unflinchingly to the very end; then, and then only, will you be worthy of the honour placed on you by God."

He dropped his hands. His own emotion had shaken him.

"Dad, I will bear it," the girl cried. Her voice rang through the room. "I am not afraid; I will stand to the end. Oh, you have spoken great words to me to-night, fine words. You have taken the sting out of things, the cruelty out of God. Oh, I am not afraid. I—I will show you one day that I can endure."

He sat down again in his chair, and she dropped suddenly on her knees, with her arms about him.

"You speak to me as no one but you would

ever speak," she said, holding him. "You appeal to me. You make me a fine woman. I don't know how you do it. I could come to you and ask you anything, knowing you would understand, sure that you could help."

He held her a moment with his arm, but he did not break the silence which fell between them. His face was very quiet, his eyes lost in their shadowy hollows.

He was his mother's son. From her he had inherited his beautiful ideas. He thought of her as he sat thus, with his arm about his daughter.

"Who am I?" she had said. "Who am I—that I should live ever in the sunshine where the flowers bloom? Give me the rain, lad, and the bitter cold, and the storms. Then will I build a great fire on my hearth, and come to no harm. And the wind can never blow too rough for me—I love the breath of it. Give me the hard toil and the fighting, and the patient nights, and the pain. Then I will thank the Lord for believing in me." He remembered that she had allowed no complaining, no out-crying against any of their childish troubles, but he remembered also how tender her hands had been when any of them had been ill.

She had been so strange a woman . . . there were tales. Once she had said: "When I've done wrong, lad, think you I will crawl to the feet of God, asking for His forgiveness? Shall I, having had my own will, deny Him His? I can bear His punishments. I have no time to waste in regrets."

Thomasine looked up.

"Dad," she whispered. The silence had been long.

He drew her close and kissed her, then put her away. He knew she was shaken, that she had been deeply touched. He wanted no outburst due merely to emotion, to excitement.

"Now, about Pendennis," he said, and his voice was practical—there was no longer any ring in it, any thrill.

"I can't go while Jeanette is ill."

"No; in any case you could not go at once. We must arrange matters. But Jeanette—you can do nothing for her. It will be long before you or any one but her mother will be permitted to see her. Perhaps at Christmas—for you will be home that day, you know. Well, I will write to-night—now. Then I will go up to bed."

"Oh, don't write now. You are so tired."

"It will not take many minutes. Just get a paper and a pen. I will let you have a trial, at any rate. And if you change your mind you have only to give up the idea."

"I shan't change my mind, Dad. I have looked at the matter from every side. I shall go on with it. I was building castles in the air this afternoon. I told them to mother." She gave him the things for which he had asked, and stood by him a moment.

"Dad," she said a little quickly, "you will write to me? You will say those things to me which—appeal? For somehow I think you can influence me more than any one."

"But I want you to think for yourself. Tell me your point of view when you write, and I will tell you mine. But don't depend too much on me."

"Ah, you don't know how I do depend. You are my comrade as well as my father."

Her fingers dwelt a moment on the thick waves of his hair. "I will go away and leave you," she said. "Be very quick, and go up to bed. Can I bring you anything? Some milk?"

"Nothing, thanks. This will not take me long. Good-night, Tamsie."

She bent and kissed him, and went to the door. With her hand on the handle she looked back, met his glance, and smiled. Then she went out, and his pen travelled rapidly over the paper.

## CHAPTER VII

"WOMEN with imagination have the best chance," said Thomasine. "Yes, I have just thought of that. You see, it is like this with them—they can imagine all the beautiful things they would be, or possess, the while they sit in their own front rooms and sew. If they have an imagination very vivid and strong, they can be as happy thinking of things as they would be if they were all true. Now, for instance, I have mended all Malcolm's underwear this morning (and he does tear his things so!), and while I sewed I thought of my living-room which one day I shall have—the Jacobean room with the window seats, and the pewter and old silver on the dresser, and the rafter across the ceiling with the carved edge—the rafter's edge, you know. So I have been very happy—quite as happy as if it had been true, for, you see, I really have such a room—in my imagination."

"That's the way to start telling fibs," said Malcolm.

The four of them were having their mid-day meal! Thomasine, having made her speech, was promptly heckled by Malcolm.

"How so?" she demanded, pausing with her fork in the air.

"You'll imagine till you believe you are what you aren't, and you have what you haven't. Then you'll start saying so."

"No, I shouldn't. . . . Oh, bother! I thought I had found a way of being perfectly content, and you have spoilt it."

"Who wants to be contented?" Malcolm demanded. "You'd never get anywhere."

"You're growing up!" said Thomasine. "And I am the head of this family."

"Oh, we run you pretty close. Some more bread, please. You'll be gone to-morrow."

"Yes, so I shall; but don't remind me of it, because now I have got to go I'd much rather not. Oh, what will you all do? Everything will be at sixes and sevens. Who'll drive you now, Dad?"

"I shall drive myself, as I used to do," said her father equably.

"That's the worst of it! You won't miss me—no one will. And Malcolm's clothes; mother will have them to mend. Poor mother! It's no fun being married and having children to look after."

"Well, you wanted to go."

"Oh, Mother, I know. I want to go—I haven't changed my mind. Only I wish I could divide myself into two people. Why can't I? There are some of Dad's patients, too—Mrs. Warren, for instance. Is she going to Dyleshart?"

"Yes, at the end of this month."

"And that boy of hers?"

"He is being looked after, and will be set to work. Everything has been arranged."

Thomasine lapsed into silence. It was at the

end of the meal when she spoke again, pushing back her chair and getting up.

"Dad, Isobel Wane was saying she is going to Dyleshart. You know I went to say 'Good-bye' to her yesterday, and she said that while Neil is in Brazil she has nothing to do, and this accident of Jeanette's has spoilt everything for her. She is very cut up about it. I don't understand about Dyleshart, yet heaps of people seem to be going there."

"We are sending Jeanette there in all probability," her father said. "The child wants expert care and treatment, and her mother will be with her."

"Can I go to see her when I come home at Christmas?"

"We will see how things turn out. Now I must go. What are you going to do?"

"Pack." She stretched her arms. "Pack all my old clothes, and my old books, and my treasures. Oh, but I am going to be desperately homesick—I can feel it in my bones. I shall want all of you, and home—my home, yes, even the mantel-border which I hate. And the shadows of the tree in the avenue on my ceiling, and the clanking of the trams all the day. Oh, mother, let's go upstairs and begin; then we can have tea cosily by the fire."

She was, however, in radiant spirits in the morning. There was no trace of drawing back or of regret. "It is a glorious world," she declared, "and I am going out into it to seek my fortune. I woke up laughing this morning, and to laugh when one wakes must be a good omen,

don't you think? . . . Oh, is it time for you to go, Malcolm? Well, this is good-bye. Give Mr. Wilkins my kind regards. You might write me sometimes."

"Yes, I might. Good-bye, old girl." They shook hands solemnly, for Thomasine never gave kisses where such were not desired. But, when her father had also to depart, there came a moment when regret was uppermost, and she clung to him. She had no words for him, only that warm pressure of her strong arms, that passionate wealth of kisses on his dear face. And so, shortly after that, she went out with her mother to the cab, and departed for the station and the train.

She stood on the step of the coach looking down at her mother with her heart too full for speech. She was very little and fragile and fair—this mother. And she, Thomasine, was her only daughter, who should stay with her, giving her help.

"Mother, am I a brute to go?" she blurted out at last.

"No, my dear. I see your point of view. And I am very happy if you are. I shall manage very well."

"You are a dear little Mother. Kiss me once more, quick. There is the green flag. Good-bye!"

She hung out of the window, waving frantically, till the platform was hidden from view. And so she set out for Pendennis, according to her desire.

## CHAPTER VIII

"I WANT to know all about it," said Thomasine's Uncle George. "You can tell me now, while I smoke. It seems a queer sort of idea for your father's girl."

"Do you think so?" Thomasine said reflectively. She looked across the rug which lay before the great open fireplace, where the flames flickered ruddily, freshly alight. She looked at her uncle, trying to see him with new eyes, just as though he were a stranger to her.

She saw a tall man, as tall as her father, but broader, heavier; a brown face, hard, even stern, and crowned with thick waves of hair, as grey as the blocks of granite on the moor beyond the farm. His moustache was grey, his eyebrows were the same, and from under them the yellow eyes looked out with a gaze so straight, so searching, that Thomasine was abashed. Her glance fell away, and travelled over him as he sat before her with his legs crossed, watching her, and smoking.

She liked the rough tweed of his coat, the dull red of his vest, his brown leather leggings, and heavy boots. She liked the long, low-ceiled room, the great fireplace, the broad windows—one of them set in a granite frame, as windows are set

in a church. She liked the dull shine of the old furniture, the shabby rugs, the brass lamp hanging over the table by chains from a hook in the ceiling. She looked up at the flaming orange-red seeds in the iris pods, which stood in dull green jars on the high mantel; they reminded her of the woods, the meadows seen through the haze, the river, and her own emotion.

The door of the dining-room in which she sat was ajar, and, as she looked up, there came to her the smell of milk being scalded in great pans over a fire, the sound of slow, heavy feet on a flagged floor, the scraping of a faggot being dragged to the hearth, and then a crisp crackling as the dry wood was thrust into the flames.

Thomasine looked again at her uncle as he sat smoking his after-dinner pipe. Then her eyes went to the soft, damp, misty world outside the window where the rain was falling gently, and, looking again at the man who watched her, she spoke.

"I don't know," she said slowly. "I wanted to come. I can't resist these things." She did not try to explain to him what things. "It is the—environment, I suppose." She was looking into herself with an attempt to analyse.

"I love these things. You know how good they are. . . . Then, besides that, I want to work. I want to be able to earn my own living. I would stay at home and work for Dad if he could give me—if he could pay me. I can't afford to work for love. Yet I should not be happy in Plymouth—not as I shall be here in the country."

"It is very quiet here," he said. His face was hidden by a cloud of smoke. "And you will find

it hard, rough work, for while you are in my employ you will have to put all your energy into it."

"I shall do that," she said, with a flash of white teeth. "And I shall not be dull. Towns are only good when one has money. And I want money for pleasure. Don't you understand? I want to grub up the cash, then go off and spend it—have a real good time till it is gone. Then back again for more. . . . And I can only put my heart into this work, Uncle George."

"And your mother? What about her?"

"She does not mind my going. Why should she? Oh, do you think I will be an ordinary woman, going stolidly along in a shabby groove? I can't settle down to that commonplace little life that is expected of me. I don't care a fig for marriage. It only means fag and worry, and scraping, until you are old and ugly and worn out. And do you see me an old maid, living in two rooms, knitting sleeping-socks? Oh, Uncle George, you know why I have come. You know what I want to do. And you do approve?"

Thomasine had risen to her feet, and was standing beyond him at the other end of the rug, an ardent aspirant for the good things in life—the good things which appealed. He saw the girl was tall and strong, finely made, and as hardy as a boy. He admired the glow of her cheeks and eyes, the ripple and shine of her hair, the vivid scarlet of her mouth. He stood up, knocked out his pipe on the bars of the grate, and went nearer to her.

"You've got your grandmother's eyes," he said,

"as I have. And with that yellow you get the love of the soil and the wind, the sun and the rain, the hard days, and the rough work. We'll make a man of you yet, Tom, my girl."

She held out her hand to him. "I knew you would understand," she said. "Now let us go out."

"Are your boots thick? Hold up! Very good. Get a hat and coat."

The girl sped out of the room and up the stairs, where a grandfather's clock stood in a recess, and a tall, narrow window looked down on the shabby carpet and sober grey paint.

Mrs. Latimer was in her room changing into her afternoon dress, with her door open, the interior of her bedroom exposed to view.

"Can I hook you up, Aunt Bess?" the girl called as she went by.

"No, my love. Are you going out?"

"Yes, rather! Uncle is waiting for me."

Aunt Bess buttoned herself into her bodice and smiled at the reflection in the mirror of her ample figure, snowy hair, and healthy, cheerful face. Thomasine had ever been a prime favourite of hers, and, though she looked on the gardening project as a mere passing whim, she was right glad to have the girl about the house.

For she had no daughter of her own; the Latimer family gave birth to sons. Two of her boys were on the farm—John, the eldest, and Peter, the youngest, who had just left school—Peter, whose eyes were blue like his mother's and who was, as she often said, far too fond of the girls for steadiness.

So Thomasine dashed down again past the open door, her short tweed skirt flourishing behind her, her cap crushed low over her hair.

"Now then!" she said, as though she drew breath for a great adventure, and Uncle George followed her out at the back door and over the cobbles in the yard where stood the pump, the great granite trough overflowing in the rain, and where the ducks were rejoicing at the edges of the wide brown pools.

## CHAPTER IX

JOHN LATIMER was carting swedes. The great white roots lay exposed to view on the damp soil, the horse moved slowly with ponderous steps down the narrow lane which had been left between the rows.

John straightened himself, lifting his cap from his head a moment as he glanced round. Between the stems of the saplings at the field's edge the road lay, white in contrast with the darkness of the fields. As he looked, a long grey car sped down the road, crossed the bridge which spanned the railway, and so passed on towards Bodmin. . . . A flutter of violet in the tonneau, a flash of grey, a purring sound. . . .

Damp mist was in the atmosphere and the soil underfoot was red-brown and heavy, every blade of grass, every weed, every leaf jewelled with the rain.

John worked in his shirt-sleeves, his brown clothes toning with the soil, his boots coated with it and heavy.

He stooped again to his work. His was the thin brown face—the typical face of the Latimer race who had come to Cornwall four generations back, and had taken root there, making the sturdy land their own. He stooped to his work and the roots were piled higher and higher in the cart.

The horse moved slowly through the field, and the mist fell, damp and clinging.

Beyond the field was an orchard, and John knew that Thomasine was at work there, and his thoughts were with her.

For the girl, who had been at Pendennis for the space of a week, was making good her boast of herself. She was early astir, the orchards and the garden had full attention; neither toil nor rain could daunt her.

She came in to her meals her boots heavy with soil, her face aglow, her hair clinging damply to her brow. She asked for and she received no consideration from her uncle. She took his commands eagerly, sometimes impudently with a flash of white teeth, and a "Yes, master," which made the man grin behind his heavy moustache. And in the evening she came down to the six o'clock meal in her old tussore dress which became her so well, took her place at the table, and carried on a conversation peculiar to herself; was willing to pour out the tea or handle the carving-knife, if such was desired of her, and was generally the life and spirit of the place.

John Latimer, the silent, looked on her rather as one would look on a phenomenon too wonderful to be understood. She was an enigma to him. Sometimes, so swift were her changes, so varied the revelations of herself, that he wondered if she were sincere.

"Mother does not care for this," she had said one night; "but then she is not strong."

"I wonder how she spared you," Aunt Bess had put in, and John, too, had wondered.

She had shown no regret at leaving home. And so no one could tell that at night she was desperately home-sick, that she fought against her tears in the dark—tears which she would have scorned to mention.

John Latimer, working in the fields, could not get her face, her personality, from his mind. He had never seen any girl like her.

The rows of swedes led the horse leisurely to the hedge. The cart was loaded with the roots. The man went round to the head of the horse and led it out towards the gate. He had not looked through the hedge into the orchard where was Thomasine.

He came back after some time with the cart empty, and ready for another load. Thomasine was within the low, grey orchard wall as he came up the lane. He saw her before she looked up; she was finishing the trench around the roots of an apple-tree and, having discarded her rough tweed coat, her blouse, with its aggressive orange tie, made a note of colour amongst the trees.

Her face was bright with colour, her brow a little knotted, her under-lip between her teeth. She smiled when she saw him, and paused with her foot on the spade. The wet was in her hair and on the nap of her cap—a grey cap of wool crushed down on her head.

"Hard work," he said, with a smile. He came close to the wall.

"This part is hard," she answered. "But I don't want to be helped. I am going to prune the roots."

"Who taught you?" he asked.

"Books taught me chiefly, but I have seen it done, and helped to do it. Uncle came and watched me this morning, and, as he said nothing, I suppose he is satisfied. These trees only want attention—they are all of them fit to bear next year. Jacob told Uncle that this one and some of the others were worn out. It just shows what he knows! He has let them grow wood till they haven't any strength for the fruit, and as for the way he feeds them—oh, he is a fool!"

"What shall you do?" he asked, leading her on.

"Prune the wood-roots and give the fruit fibre a chance. . . . Do you know about trees? Aren't they interesting? . . . And Jacob has pruned the tap-roots of the trees in the garden—the special ones."

"Don't you approve?"

"No, of course I don't. The tap-root keeps the tree firm. It is not to be cut at all. He has got to do what I say now I am here. If not, Uncle can sack him."

She lifted the spade, turning up the soil. The roots of the tree were exposed to view in the trench she had made. He watched her with interest. He saw she carried her pruning-knife slung on a swivel at her belt, and that she handled her spade with the ease of strong arms. He could not but admire her.

He waited, leaning over the low grey wall while she finished the last foot of the trench. She worked as though his presence were forgotten, neither looking at him again nor speaking to him, and having finished digging, she put down the

spade, took the knife from her belt, and stooped to prune the roots.

The damp mist, the fresh smell of the earth, and the green and brown and grey of the orchard all made a perfect setting for the girl with the fresh, strong face, the fine supple figure, who moved before the man's steady, interested eyes. The note of orange at her throat—the one bit of vanity about her, pleased him; the long, brown, soiled hands, dexterous as a surgeon's, shapely despite their toil with the spade, held his attention so that he waited there, watching her while she worked.

"You are wasting your time," she said at last, looking up at him, and he was pleased at the words, for they showed him that this was not an episode, a mere passing fancy, but real, serious earnest.

He said nothing; he turned away from the wall to the waiting horse, and returned to the swedes.

When he went back to the house at nightfall, having stabled the horse, and picked his way across the darkness of the cobbled yard to the back door, there met him with the lamp-light and the smell of cooking in the kitchen a singing voice, pitched high and clear.

There were no words, but the notes came to him bell-like and sweet. He halted on the step, afraid that at his entry the voice would cease, and a whirling shadow came and went before him on the passage floor.

He went forward till he could see into the kitchen, where the lamp on the table and the faggot on the hearth dispersed the shadows, so that they

lingered only in the far corners and in the rafters amongst the shrouded hams, the onions, and the pudding-basins.

And he saw Thomasine, dancing as she sang, her flying feet leaving round, wet marks on the flags. She whirled like a leaf in the wind, swaying from foot to foot, coming crouchingly from the shadows beyond the light, flashing across the width of the room to whirl again in the shadows. John Latimer watched, amazed. The clear voice rose high and sweet when the girl whirled in the light, fell to an echo when she swayed in the half-dark. The dash of orange-colour under her chin seemed a flame of fire, and, as he stepped nearer to see her all down the room, her eyes found his, and gleamed. She flashed past him with a swinging skirt, her thrown-back face full of fire, of insolence. He felt the sting of hot blood rising in his own cheek; he watched with fascinated gaze.

Then quick steps sounded in the passage behind the curtain which shut off this part of the house, and, as Mrs. Latimer came into the lamp-light, Thomasine vanished through the door beyond.

His mother looked at her son, who stood there outwardly a little stolid but inwardly afire, and she laughed with tolerant indulgence.

"Tamsie again!" she said. "And her feet so wet! It passes me how she never takes cold. The difference she makes in the house!"

She went with her quick, soft step to the long table and busied herself with a great blue dish of apples, ready peeled, cored, and shredded for making into jam.

"I have made twelve pounds of jam to-day," she said, "and I am making more to-morrow."

From the dark scullery beyond the kitchen came the voice of Thomasine.

"May I have the skimmings for tea, Auntie Bess? Do let me."

"Why, of course, if you like. What are you doing out there?"

"Cleaning my boots."

"In the dark? John, take her a candle."

"No, I can manage very well. Besides, I have finished. I am going upstairs to dress."

John Latimer still stood there listening, waiting for her to come through the kitchen and go upstairs. There was a little silence, then he heard soft whistling, and he knew by the sound that she was behind him in the passage.

So she had gone out over the cobbles in the darkness, probably still with only her stockings on her feet, to avoid passing him in reaching the stairs. Why?

He turned away, and went out of the fire-light with a brooding look in his eyes.

Thomasine, in the privacy of her own room, was already taking a shower-bath by candle-light. She had made this a rule, and delighted in it when she came in hot and wet, and not a little tired, and, because of it, she went downstairs to supper each night a new and very radiant being.

The great brown towel having played its part, the girl dressed afresh, and brushed her hair. This was her only important toilet of the day, and, being a woman, she loved the whole ritual, and performed it with a scrupulous attention to details.

She delighted in herself, in her body, in her attainments, in her abilities. She always acknowledged her own beauty, considering it, and rightly, a gift of the gods, which it was her duty to cherish.

"I should admire it in another," she had said, "therefore why not in myself? If I did not I should be vain indeed, for insincere depreciation is conceit."

To-night, as she dressed, she thought of that strange look on John's face when he had come into the kitchen and found her there dancing and singing. She could not understand why she had gone round by the yard to escape him; she had been suddenly shy.

What had she seen in his face? Wonder, amaze, admiration. He had thought her wonderful, beautiful, amazing. No other man had looked at her with an expression such as that. The thought fired her; her shyness disappeared. She was strong, she was alive, she could have her will with any man, with John! She had stumbled on yet another glory in herself. She had power. She could charm, she could please. . . .

"I whistled behind him in the passage," she said to herself. "I was afraid to face him for a moment, but I wanted him to know I was there. Is this what they mean by flirtations? It is a very good game."

She extinguished the candle, left it on the table by the bed, and went out to the stairs. She descended slowly, debating with herself, feeling self-conscious, afraid to go into the dining-room, afraid of supper and her seat opposite John. The steady gaze of his yellow eyes . . . they were difficult to meet.

But he was not in the dining-room—only Peter by the fire with a newspaper, and Aunt Bess busy at the table. Peter looked up at her entrance.

"Hullo, Tom," he said. "I heard you singing in the kitchen. Anything up?"

"No, nothing special, I think. I like the weather, or it likes me, or both."

"Do you like rain? We haven't had any since you came, Jonah!"

"Jonah yourself!" This was quite in the spirit in which she had badgered Malcolm at home.

"And I do like rain. It makes my hair curl. *Nothing* would make your hair curl, I suppose?"

"Oh yes, I know one thing that would."

"What, then?"

He looked up at her—a long, lazy boy, with very blue eyes which twinkled with complete eloquence.

"Oh, bosh!" she said, just as though he had spoken.

"What is bosh?" he demanded.

"The stuff you think of. Oh, Peter, I like your eyes to be blue!"

"Do you indeed, by Jove! Why?"

"Just because they are blue. I am tired of the yellow Latimer eyes. I wish I could make mine blue."

"Well, you could paint them."

"I couldn't paint twinkles like you have in yours. Let me look. Why, the Latimers can only glare like an angry lion in the Zoo!"

She was on the rug by the leaping fire, and Peter lay back in his chair and regarded her with the amused superiority of his nineteen years,

and, as the words dropped off her ready tongue, John came into the room with the cat-like tread of a man whose slippers are not on his feet, but warming themselves by the fire. Thomasine had not looked round.

"Why don't you come out in the kitchen when I sing?" she demanded of Peter. "I was having a lovely time."

"Yes, so I thought. Your voice carries very well, and I could hear it quite distinctly, you know, from my chair. When you are as old as I am you won't dash yourself about every time you hear anything."

Thomasine giggled.

To John the two, this girl and his brother, appeared to be on extremely good terms of friendship, and Thomasine on the rug, when the light played upon her, was distracting. He waited watching her, forgetting his slippers, which were within the fender, so close at her hand that she saw them there and took them up.

"Yours?" she asked, glancing at Peter.

"John's," he said lazily.

"Oh—John's!" She put them a little hastily back in their place. Peter laughed suddenly.

"One for you, old man," he said, looking up at John over Thomasine's head.

The girl flashed round.

"Oh, are you there?" she said, confused, then added sharply, "Why don't you sit down and get warm?"

He took this remark as a definite invitation, sat down at once in the chair behind her, and put his very warm slippers on his feet.

Thomasine sat on the rug irresolute.

"It is All Hallows' Eve on Thursday," she said presently, for anything was better than being tongue-tied because of this inexplicable shyness.

"And your birthday," said Peter.

"Yes, your birthday, Tamsie," put in Aunt Bess. "We must have a special evening in honour of it. Come, supper is ready."

Peter got up by degrees, stretching himself.

"What'll you have for your birthday, Tom?" he said.

"A gardening book."

"A gardening book!" he mimicked. "Not pearls, or something like that?"

"I shall never wear pearls," said Thomasine, "and, anyway, you couldn't give them to me."

Her face sobered as the thought of Jeanette came to her—Jeanette, who had chosen pearls.

## CHAPTER X

THE autumn passed—a series of wet days; Christmas came, a day of warm rain; January set in with sharp frost, diamond days with skies of delicate blue.

To Thomasine life was wonderfully beautiful, free alike from sorrow and care, full of hope and pride and ambition. She radiated happiness. Her shrill blackbird whistling resounded through the house in the early mornings before dawn, when men and women alike were stirring, preparing for the work of the day.

Aunt Bess in the dairy and kitchen with her maids, a grey shawl pinned over her motherly bosom, a huge white apron enveloping her person, heard her, and thought sometimes how dull the house would be if she were gone.

John, coming in after an all-night vigil in the fields with the sheep, bringing, perhaps, some motherless new-born lamb for warmth and care by the fire, heard her also, and waited to greet her as she came into the lamp-light.

Even his father had a word for the girl as he went out to the white, rime-covered fields, over which the dawn would break with a glimmer of rose and gold; and Peter, cracking the ice in the trough that the horses might drink, would whistle back cheerily.

So Thomasine would descend the dark stairs ready for the day, in her short tweed skirt and simple blouse, her hair coiled close and securely pinned, her skin yet tingling from the vigorous application of ice-cold water, march into the dairy and kiss Aunt Bess, take hold of Uncle George by his rough tweed coat to treat him likewise, nod to John who awaited her, and straightway turn her attention to the lamb he had brought or to the bacon on the table waiting to be placed in the pan.

Thus, one morning when the windows were ashine with the flowers of frost, when her fingers were yet a little numb and tingling at the ends, she came down to the kitchen where John awaited silent and watchful, and, having kissed her Uncle by the door (and ruffled his hair as she did so with easy impudence), she surprised on the face of the man by the fire an expression which made her pause. He was standing, not by the range, but by the wide hearth where were burnt the faggots from the stack, or, at times, the great logs of green wood ; and the dancing flames lit up his face so that it stood out sharply, darkly, against their brilliance.

The gleam of the fire was in his eyes, so that they seemed like flames, and Thomasine, the heedless, saw, as she paused, something about him that made her think of a sword half-drawn from its sheath so that its light dazzled her. She could not define his expression, yet she had seen it once before when he had come into the kitchen and found her singing and dancing. He had been so utterly quiet ; so, it seemed, uninteresting ; no

spark of her vitality had set fire to his nature, no word of hers, however daring, had brought any return of that expression into his face since that night. And Thomasine, after that momentary surprise and emotion, had forgotten him, had ignored him while she bandied gay words or scuffled with Peter.

But here it was again. A shine as of a sword half-bared in the dark, and the girl paused, one foot before the other, in the very act of motion, and looked across the intervening space at his face while he, motionless also, looked back at her.

Then he moved and held out his hand to her just as her father had so often done, so that, instinctively, she went forward towards him. Then she halted again, like a young wild animal, untamed and afraid, but she could not turn away from him, could not close her eyes to the burning light in his, to the quivering of his face.

"Tom!"

Some one was coming from the dairy. Peter's voice rang out from the yard.

"John! Hullo! Hurry up!"

Then, suddenly, Thomasine was caught in a pair of strong, cruel arms, was swung off her feet, was kissed once fiercely on her mouth, was released, and alone. The thing had happened with such startling suddenness that it left her with a wildly beating heart and utter bewilderment. Was it John who had crushed her like that, and so kissed her? *John*—the silent, the taciturn, the stolid?

Her hand went up to her lips as though they were bruised and sore; her brows met in a frown. Aunt Bess came into the kitchen from the dairy;

a branch on the hearth fell outwards, showering sparks ; the girl went forward and kicked it back fiercely into the glowing heart of the fire.

"Will you cook the bacon, my love?" Aunt Bess asked from the table, for Thomasine was not only gardener, but, as she expressed it, "general handy man."

"For," said she, "I want to know everything I possibly can—all about the stock, the crops, the soil, the machinery, and even the cooking, because I am going abroad one day and no one knows what I may want."

"I thought you were to be a steward on an estate," Peter had remarked.

"Yes, afterwards," she had answered equably.

"Yes, Auntie Bess," she replied, going forward to the table, still with the frown between her brows and with her eyes downcast.

Aunt Bess noticed nothing amiss, but hurried back to the dairy and her butter-making. The dawn had broken ; the east window of the kitchen was full of the early light. Thomasine extinguished the lamp.

She could not define the feeling that possessed her because of this inexplicable action of John's. She was angry, resentful, puzzled, pleased, and afraid. Why had he kissed her? If it had been Peter, now—well, it would have meant a scuffle, half in earnest, half in mirth, but Peter could not have kissed her like that. Why, he often claimed from her his privilege as a cousin, but John had never touched her before.

The bacon in the pan over the coals in the range hissed and spat, distributing an appetizing odour

throughout the great kitchen. The huge iron kettle hanging from the tripod over the faggot began to boil over into the flames. Thomasine went from kettle to pan, and from pan to kettle, and, under all her anger and bewilderment, there grew again that sense of exaltation which had filled her that night when he, John, had found her dancing in the kitchen.

She liked what had happened ; it filled her with delight, it made her afraid. Life held new pleasures, pleasures which called for daring, for courage, for charm.

Thomasine lifted the bacon from the pan to the hot dish on the shelf above the stove ; the kitchen was full of sunlight and fire-light, of warmth, of good odour, of delight.

"Oh, dear warm world !" the girl said low in her heart. It was the old note of exultant appreciation.

John did not come to the breakfast table ; Peter and his father came late and went out early. The lambing season was in full swing.

"Tamsie shall bring out some lunch to you at eleven o'clock," said Aunt Bess. "And I will put up something for Peter to take with him to John."

"And be ready for any lambs sent up here," said Uncle George. "It is bitter cold ; the wind is blowing from the east enough to take the skin off a man's face. If it veers round to the north we shall have snow. Be ready for the lambs, Tom, my girl."

He got up and went out, and Peter followed him. "It's all right being a girl," he said, for he never

wasted an opportunity to tease. "You can stay by the fire all day."

"I wish I'd never given you that muffler at Christmas," said Thomasine. "Now, run away at once, like a good boy."

He came back again to answer this, and grinned at her round the door, his blue eyes alight. He grimaced at her after the manner of a love-sick clown, and wafted her a kiss from the back of his hand. This was entirely appropriate to Peter, and instantly the girl compared him with John. This of Peter's was silly nonsense—what had been that kiss of John's?

She went out to the kitchen when Peter had gone, and prepared for the lambs that would be sent in during the day, and while she worked at that and helped Aunt Bess in the dairy or over the stove, she felt all the while that rough clasp, that greedy kiss.

"I shall never be able to do without you," Aunt Bess said, as eleven o'clock approached, and she put up a basket with a jug of hot soup and some bread for the men. "It seemed so strange and quiet on Christmas Day while you were home."

She had already made this remark some twenty times during the past two weeks, and Thomasine responded as always—

"But I was only home three days."

"It seemed a long time," said Aunt Bess placidly.

"It was a short time to me," Thomasine put in volubly. She felt a sudden desire to talk. "And everything was just the same, you know, even the mantel-border. And all the boys were

home. . . . And the chair I gave Dad—he was awfully pleased, just as Mother was with her lace collar.”

“You spent all your money on presents,” said Aunt Bess.

“Yes, and I got some fun out of it, and I might just as well spend it on that as not. Uncle George only gave me three days, and, of course, he is my boss. But you can’t have a bust-up in three days, especially when your mother and father won’t let you out of their sight for a minute.”

“It passes me how they spare you.”

“They don’t spare me. I just said what I wanted to do, and I did it. Dad told me I looked very well and very happy, and he likes my letters. Oh, you don’t know what a darling he is! He used to tell me his beautiful ideas. He used to make me feel myself a very brave and gallant person, and so I tried to be gallant. It was like a game. When he told me about Jeanette, and I was shocked, he just said ‘Steady!’ very curtly, like that. It was like a command. So I never felt any more horrified about Jeanette—only sorry.”

“He had queer ideas,” Aunt Bess began, “always—from when he was a boy. His mother held queer ideas, too. You know her little girl died—your Aunt Margaret, as she would have been. She was younger than your father. She was thrown from a horse and killed. I was here with your Uncle George when they brought her in, and carried her up to the bed and laid her down. ‘Go away quietly,’ says she, ‘and leave me here.’ But I was afraid, because of the look on her face. ‘Go, Bess,’ she said. ‘You don’t under-

stand. I am not grieving for my child. Only morbid people, faithless people, weep for their dead who are happy. Go and leave me to pray for my girl.' "

Thomasine listened with a far-away look in her eyes. This was another of those great but difficult ideas. But, of course, if one loved God, one would not sorrow for one's dead—one would only ask Him to take the dear one, to be kind, and give courage to those who were left.

But only a very strong soul could make of such ideas as these a practice in the dark hours of grief and pain; only a very great faith could believe so resolutely in God.

"Dad said that kind of thing of trouble in life," the girl said dreamily. "He said we were not to flinch, or draw back, or cry out. But it seems to me if the trouble were very great and terrible, that would be so hard. But he says real trouble which we can't help, which comes through no fault of our own, is an honour, that God is testing us."

"I know," said Aunt Bess; "I have heard your grandmother speak like that. She was a wonderful woman. But trouble will not come to you, I hope, my love. Here is the basket; be careful of the soup, keep the cloth about the jug all the way. There"—she turned and kissed the girl—"run along," she said, "and don't trouble your head about such difficult ideas."

Thomasine took the basket and went out through the yard door, and across the cobbles, slippery now with ice. The one-time brown, muddy pools were all firmly frozen over, and disconsolate ducks crouched in the shelter of the trough. The girl

turned up the collar of her coat, pausing to do so, and placing the heavy basket on the ground. She had suffered a momentary depression of that exaltation of her spirits for, boast as she might, this talk that cropped up at times of trouble, and pain, and death worried her. She was too healthy to wish to think of them. Yet these things were a part of life—a necessary part which every one, herself included, must face. It was only when something—some word of her father's, for instance—had uplifted her, had taken her out of herself, that she felt herself of that stuff which makes heroes and martyrs of common men and women. But even then, even when she was thus uplifted, her expectation was wrong. For she only imagined something very great, something very apparent, such as Jeanette was suffering; she thought not at all of those endless little troubles which are the lot of many, and the sum of which is so heavy a burden. She only saw herself as the heroine of some great strife played out doggedly to a glorious end in the sight of an admiring audience; she saw herself not at all as a woman keeping her peace under the fret of the commonplace.

"Grandmother had wonderful ideas," she soliloquized, taking up the basket again and crossing the yard. "She thought unavoidable trouble an honour; she would not weep for her dead, because, according to her faith, they were happy. She thought asking forgiveness of sins a cowardice. If she sinned she took her punishment. She never doubted things would come right in the end. . . . I wish to goodness I had known her—that she had not died before I was born. She could have told me all manner of things."

The bitter wind met her as she crossed the barn-yard to the road. It whipped her skirts ; it cut her face ; she bowed before it.

" This is horrid ! " she said, hurrying. " Give me the rough wind which blusters—but not this bitterness with the sun shining at the same time in a blue sky. I shall come back through the orchards. I wonder if my trees are hurt—I bedded them down so well and covered the weak ones."

Thomasine, as she battled with the wind, as it cut her face and impeded her, as her feet and hands grew numb, scowled darkly, holding the basket close.

" This is rotten ! " she said. She opened a gate and entered a field which would lead her to the folds where the sheep were. She kicked the gate viciously, fastened it again, and went on her way.

The field was steep, and as she went up to the summit the wind grew yet more bitter and cruel. The blue sky sparkled, the hard ground glittered, every blade of grass, every leaf was patterned with frost.

" Wish I'd gone by the road," she said. " It is just as far. Oh ! there goes Aunt Bess's precious cloth."

Below her, as the field sloped down again, was the valley or coombe with a stream running through on its way to the sea, and here in the shelter were the folds, the sheep, and the men. At any other time she would have raised the echoes with a cheerful call, but now she was silent as she stumbled on, still facing the east and the knife-like wind. But, as she approached the sheds and

the sheltering group of lifeless trees, the bitterness was less keen. Her blood began to tingle in her veins, her fingers ached as some warmth crept into them. Peter came out of one of the sheds, closing the door carefully behind him.

"Oh, Peter, what a horrid wind!" she began crossly. He turned and surveyed her.

"Bitter, isn't it?" he said. "You look blue. I told you you had better stay by the fire."

"Oh, shut up! I have come over with some soup and things for you. I don't see what you want it for, and the cloth blew away. You will have to go and get it, for I'm sure I won't."

Peter whistled. "Oh, I'll get it all right. Here, go in there, it is warm."

He opened one of the doors.

"All my fingers are aching," she said, "and I haven't any feet. I hate this weather!"

She went past him into the shed; the warmth of it was like a comforting caress. Peter shut the door, and she stood in darkness after the glittering light outside.

To her there came the sound of a feeble bleat, then a movement, then John's voice speaking to her.

"Put down the basket," he said. "You will soon be warm."

John! All the discomfort was forgotten. . . . John, who had kissed her at dawn! How curtly he spoke.

She waited a moment and, as her eyes grew accustomed to the dim light, she saw him stooping over a white object in the corner, while a mild-faced sheep watched him, unafraid. Curiosity drew

her near—there were three lambs on the straw, strange, helpless creatures with long awkward legs, and John was trying to feed one of them with a bottle of milk.

Thomasine felt a curious sensation as she watched. The shed was full of a strange smell, and was quite warm ; the lamb bleated mournfully, faintly, and made no effort to suckle. John's hands seemed very dark against the white bodies, his face was hidden, his hair roughened ; the ewe watched him with strangely patient eyes.

Then Thomasine crouched down by the straw. The ewe turned her head, but made no effort to move. Thomasine pulled off her gloves.

"Give me the milk," she said.

She took the bottle from him and, unscrewing the top, wetted her fingers with the milk and put them into the soft mouth of the bleating lamb. She felt it swallow. Again and again she fed the lamb with her fingers so that its bleating ceased.

"I tried that," said John at last, "but it didn't act. Seems to like your fingers. The mother can only take two of them, and this one is a weakling, unable to manage for itself." He spoke with restraint, getting up and stretching himself a little wearily. Thomasine continued to feed the lamb with absorbed attention, as if she had not heard. He stood there close behind her, looking down at her ; she could feel the intensity of his gaze. She did not look up at him or speak, and, after a moment, his voice came again, still full of restraint and studiously conventional.

"Where did you put the basket?" he said.

She swept her hand towards the door, but said nothing. She was neither angry with him, nor resentful, nor pleased; she was afraid.

He went to the basket and lifted out the jug of soup.

Then Peter came in, kicking open the door, and shutting it quickly. "Soup!" he cried. "So-up! Beautiful soup! Here's your tea-cloth, Tom."

She looked round at him, nodded, and continued to feed the lamb.

"Oh, you're a good sort," Peter said. "Even that lamb knows it. Cottoned on to you for good. You'd better take it home with you and continue to minister to its infantile needs. A ribbon collar and a silver bell will make it pretty. Here's to you!"

He drank off a cupful of the soup with a flourish.

"Go away," said Thomasine brusquely; "don't make so much noise."

Peter paused as though thunderstruck.

"Noise!" he repeated. "*Noise!* And go away out of the shed where I've worked since I was no bigger than—oh, all right, I'll go. Am I allowed to take the governor his share of the soup?"

He took up the jug and buttoned his coat over it by way of keeping the contents warm while he went to his father. Thomasine continued to feed the lamb, fully conscious of John's presence. She did not want to be left alone with him.

"John can go too," she said, without looking up. "I will stay here."

"We can both of us go away and leave her alone," paraphrased Peter. "Come on out of it."

Miss Latimer isn't going to let any lamb perish while she is about. 'Death hath no sting'—etcetera ! ”

He opened the door and went out.

“Come on, Jack,” he said.

John kicked the door full upon him, whereupon Peter howled. They heard him outside loudly de-claiming that the jug was “busted.”

Thomasine giggled helplessly.

John came back to her and stooped down. Under her lashes Thomasine looked up at him ; his eyes were not on her but on the lamb.

“It will do well if you continue to feed it. I'll take it back to the house for you,” he said.

He took the now empty bottle from her ; she wiped her fingers on her handkerchief and was very still. She did not know what to say to him ; she did not know what he would do, but she knelt there as under a spell.

Then his hands came to her shoulders, and she was drawn back so that his face was above her, looking down at her. The mother-ewe watched placidly, her children moving awkwardly and bleating by her side. The shed was very dark and warm ; the straw rustled as the girl was drawn back passively into the man's arms.

His face was very grave ; there was no passion in it, no light as there had been in the morning, making her think of a sword half drawn. She had no time to comprehend herself. She felt no anger, only a kind of fear. She was afraid to speak, or move, or draw away. She felt helpless ; his hands were strong, their movement slow, his face very grave and still.

He drew her back till she leaned against him, her waist at his knee. He held her there. Then the light came to his face—even in the dimness of the shed she saw it : saw the gleam in his eyes, the absolute glory of his face.

"Tom ! " His voice, low as it had been in the morning, low and hoarse and quivering. " I love you," he said. His lips hardly moved as he said the words. He spoke through his teeth ; she saw their line of whiteness. " I love you," he said, still holding her ; then he let his head drop so that his lips met hers.

At that touch she awoke. Something akin to delirium flashed through her ; the blood in her head beat like drums ; her heart galloped furiously, her pulses throbbed. She felt inexplicably weak as the full tide surged through her, and she rejoiced.

She lifted her hands and held him by the lapels of his coat ; she gave him back his kisses, passionately. Her eyes danced and burnt, she quivered as he held her. His arms held her close ; fiercely and roughly he kissed her mouth, her eyes, her hair.

"Tom ! Tom ! " His hoarse voice was barely audible. He had lifted her up from the straw, she was entirely in his arms. Even his kisses ceased, the silence grew deep as he held her with his face against her throat. Her hands were at his neck, she could feel his breath flutter against her skin, she felt his eyelids quiver ; under her body his heart was beating with a mad intensity. And the feeling in herself, which had changed from a passionate fear to a wild exultation, now became

an unutterable glory—at once a yearning and a satisfaction so great as to be unbearable.

This silent man! Of all women she alone could draw this sword from its sheath, so that the light of it was a glory, the touch of it a joy. She held his pleasure at her will. He was hers. His kisses warmed her, his arms were strong. He would do whatsoever she commanded him.

He lifted his head so that she saw his face. It seemed to him that she lay in his arms willingly, at rest.

"Oh, Tom," he said. "You do love me. Oh, my dear, my dear!"

He released her slowly and they stood up. Again his arm found her and held her, not fiercely now, but tenderly and very close. She could not bear the look on his face, she hid her eyes against his coat.

He said nothing. Only she felt his lips on her hair. She had no idea how long they stood there.

"God bless you, my darling!" he said at last, in that unfamiliar voice, and then released her.

She could not bear his face. She stood looking at him, her fingers restless, her own face white and awed. Then, suddenly, because of that emotion he could not hide, and which she could not bear, she went to him.

"John, don't look like that," she faltered. The glory and the pride which had filled her were gone. She wished to comfort. He caught her outstretched hand and pressed it to his lips.

"If I can make you as happy, Tom, as you have made me——", he began.

"I am happy," she said.

Again his arm went round her.

"You are happy? Without any shadow of doubt?"

"Yes, dear."

He kissed her upturned face.

"I must go out," he said at last as he released her. "I will carry the lamb back to the house for you. Will you wait for me?"

"I will wait here," she said. "I want to be alone."

"I shan't be very long. If you get tired you can start. I will overtake you."

She nodded, and returned to her old position by the straw. He went out, closing the door behind him.

Thomasine knelt there, her fingers caressing the lamb, her face very still and grave. She had no definite thought in her mind, she could not understand herself. She knelt quite motionless, her head bent, her right hand caressing the lamb.

Once she muttered half-audibly, "I wish Dad were here," and later, when John came back, and the door creaked as he opened it, "I wonder——" she said, and got up.

"We will go back to the house," he said. His face was quite grave and still. The sword was fully sheathed. And yet—as Thomasine rose to her feet her glance met his and he smiled at her. That smile made her feel intimate, friendly, so that her spirits mounted up again—not to that exaltation which had seized them a while ago, but to a radiant gaiety which was natural to them.

He lifted the lamb from the straw, wrapping it in an old coat so that, as it lay in his arms, it seemed to Thomasine like a little child.

"Let me carry it," she said eagerly.

"Would you like to? Sure?"

"Yes, please. We shall have our backs to the wind and I can keep it warm."

"It won't be too heavy?"

"Heavy! Not a bit. There . . . dear little thing. Let's hurry, then I can give it some more milk."

The bitter wind met them as they went together out of the shed. Thomasine held the lamb close, shielding it with her body and arms.

"The basket," she said. "We must take it back."

Thus they started, meeting no one. Thomasine carried the lamb, John had the empty basket, and as they climbed the field from the coombe she felt his hand at her waist helping her, for the way was not only steep but slippery.

"It seems like a dream," said John at last, as they reached the summit and started down again towards the gate. "Oh, Tom, I can't believe it is true. And I feel that if it is true it ought not to be. I should have asked your father. It isn't as if you were in your own home."

"How would that matter?" Thomasine asked. Then suddenly, with her usual desire to talk and unburden her mind, "Do you know, I was puzzled just now," she said. "I felt so excited and sorry all at once. I wanted to scream, I wanted to laugh, I wanted to cry. But now I feel that even these cold days and this hateful wind and all can be perfect."

"I am glad you are happy. I want you to be happy. I shall try to give you everything you want."

"But I want everything I see," said Thomasine, and she laughed. "You know I am very ambitious. I have built such wonderful castles in the air, and they will come true, won't they?"

"You have never told me much of them," he said. "You must tell me." He opened the gate for her to pass into the road. "Oh, we will have some good times, darling. I will write to your father to-night, and I must tell my father. Can you keep it secret until I have spoken to him?"

"We shall be engaged then, shan't we?" said Thomasine, after a little pause.

"Yes," he answered, "and the only thing that I regret is that you are so young. It doesn't seem fair. You might meet so many other chances. Peter, now—he is more like you than I am."

Thomasine seemed to be considering. She walked in silence to the gate of the barn-yard, and, still in silence, over the straw and frozen ruts, past the wood-stack to the door in the wall.

There was no one in the yard. At the door John paused, his hand on the latch, his face anxiously watching her, his brow contracted.

She understood at once. Even now he was not sure of her. She laughed, her head thrown back, the bright sunlight in her eyes. Her face was aglow, her loosened hair gleamed gold under the close grey cap.

"Have I not told you?" she said. "Open the door."

He opened it, his anxiety, gone.

"Silly John!" she said as she passed him. He followed her over the cobbles to the house.

## CHAPTER XI

It was March. The evenings were lengthening, the wind blew roughly, the orchards were golden with daffodils.

Thomasine lay on the ground under the apple-trees, where already the little buds were growing fat and green. There was much to do these days in the early spring; the girl was early astir, abroad in all weathers, working in the garden, the orchards, the fields. For she had a part in all the routine of the work on the farm; nothing was done but she must know of it, and the reason why.

Uncle George laughed at her, yet he answered her questions, and gave her work to do which showed his opinion of her strength. Sometimes he would come and watch, his great hands in his pockets, his legs apart.

"You're a fine girl, Tom," he would say occasionally, and sometimes add by way of warning, "but you are no man for all that.. Leave that job for Peter—or I will send Jacob up by and by."

"I'd sack Jacob were I the boss," Thomasine would say. "He shall not touch my trees. What'll you bet," she demanded one day, looking up at him eagerly from the bed she was

preparing in the vegetable garden—"what'll you bet that you get not less than six firsts, reserves, or specials for fruit at the shows this season?"

"Bet you a month's wages," he said with vigour.

"Shows your lack of principle, then," she answered, with the impudence which, coming from her, amused him. "But it's done with you I am."

She lay, this afternoon of wind and fitful sunshine, full length under her apple-trees, so that the yellow daffodils looked to her like a limitless expanse of quivering gold. Overhead through the grey branches the sky was piled with great fleecy clouds; between them the blue seemed fathomless.

Thomasine, the pagan, drew a great sigh of content. Her hands lay lax and still on the mossy earth, her eyes looked out across the gold.

"Oh, *dear* warm world!" she said.

Her breath came evenly in deep sighs. The daffodils tossed and quivered in the wind. She dropped her head sideways on her hands. She looked through a pathless forest of pale green stems, the apple-trees stood at an unfamiliar height above her head, the wind was full of a curious scent, indefinite, delicate.

"Oh, God! oh, God!" said Thomasine. Her hands clutched convulsively at the moss.

"These things," she said incoherently—"these things, they hurt. They make me sad. They make me restless—they disturb me. And yet—oh, I love them, the blue and the gold, the green and grey, the sun and wind. I do wonder what

it all means, all this beauty. No one to look at it but me. Oh, it is such waste, and I love it, I love it ! ”

She looked up at a fluttering of wings in the tree overhead. She whistled softly to the birds as they came and went.

“ House-building,” she said. “ What do they care? Even the birds. Are nests, and eggs, and young ones so important? ”

There was no ring on her left hand—one could not wear it when working in the gardens. Yet she lifted her head and examined her hand as though it stirred her memory.

“ Oh, he is stupid,” she said, and her brows met. “ He thinks I shall settle down here for ever. He thinks I shall be content with him and his housekeeping, and with babies. He does not understand. I want my career, I want to see this glorious world, I want to do all the things that are worth doing. If only, he were not so stay-at-home—if only he would gad about with me. Does he think it is Pendennis I love? Oh, I have told him so many times that I am here because I must work, because I have no money, and because I must have money. Farms are good, and the orchards are good, but this is such a small corner. I want more, I want a lot more. Oh, you little yellow flowers, am I to grow old, and ugly, and fat, too, like Auntie Bess? And no one will have seen me, no one will know me, and I shall have been nowhere, have seen nothing. And yet ”—she dropped her head again upon her hands—“ oh, I can do as I like with him—please him, torment him, make him laugh. He

is like a sword, and no one can draw him but me. And his eyes are yellow, too, as mine are."

The daffodils danced in the wind as though they laughed; the busy birds passed with fluttering wings overhead, the sun came and went among the sailing clouds. For a long time Thomasine lay there on the ground, her face sideways on her hands, her eyes brooding, the colour of them lost in the shadows of their lids.

The sound of swift, light wheels reached her from the road beyond the low grey wall. They stopped, and John's voice hailed her.

"Tom!"

She turned and looked at him, lifting herself up.

"What?" she said.

He was sitting in the dogcart, not in his working clothes, but smart and well-groomed. The horse fretted as he held it in, the cart shifted and swayed, its paint and polished brass shining in the sun.

"I am driving to Trekerret," he said. "Can you come?"

"No, how can I? I am not dressed."

"Never mind that. Do come, Tom. I'd have asked you before, only I didn't know where you were."

"No, I can't. Look at my boots, for one thing. . . . Oh, but you make me want to go."

He laughed. "Come then," he said.

"No, I won't, but I'll tell you what I will do. I'll walk in to Trekerret after tea, and you can drive me back from there. I'll be there at seven by the Post-office. Oh, don't hold that colt any

longer, you'll have trouble enough as it is. Go on, John. I'll be at the Post-office."

"All right."

She listened to the whirr of the wheels as he sped up the road. He had broken the spell which had kept her so long with the daffodils lost in thought. She got up slowly. "I'll go in," she said. "I will have an early tea, and then walk to Trekerret by myself. Oh, dear! I wish I could straighten things out in my mind. Everything is so muddled. I wish Dad would come down—yet I don't believe I ever shall be able to ask even him." She went out of the gateway into the road.

"I want John," she said, looking up into the sky. "I want him because he gives me—a feeling. But I don't want to settle down here for ever. And yet how can I tell him so that he will understand? Besides, if I say I don't want to marry him everything will be spoilt, and there will be such a fuss. Oh, bother it all! Why can't a girl live her own life?"

There was a letter awaiting her on the table in the dining-room. Thomasine took it up and went out to the scullery to remove her heavy boots. Everything was very quiet, with that quietness which is deepened by small sounds. The fire on the hearth had burnt down to a red core under the ash, a cat lay basking before it; the clock in the corner ticked loudly; the window rattled a little in the strong wind.

Thomasine felt restless. Everything seemed so peaceful, so quiet, so everlasting.

"Oh, I do hate this sort of atmosphere," she

said. "It is as though nothing lived. Everything is arrested and still. I can never settle down to this sort of thing. I shall go away. I shall go somewhere else. I want to learn a lot more, about trees especially,—delicate trees. And I want some glorious holidays. I want to go abroad—anywhere where there is a garden, or an orchard, or a fruit-farm, so that I can get work. It is such a splendid, reasonable scheme. And then, later on, I want a post on an estate, with hunting, and shooting, and fishing, and golf. Somewhere near the sea. John can't give me these things. He hasn't any right to ask me to give it all up for him. I shall tell him so. And then I suppose he will think me selfish and heartless, and he won't like me any more."

She went back through the kitchen, the passage, and the curtained door, to the front of the house, and upstairs to her room. She tossed her letter on the bed as though she had forgotten it, or was indifferent. The envelope was in her father's writing.

Slowly she slipped out of her tweeds and flannel blouse, performed her toilet, and dressed afresh. There was a narrow strip of mirror in her wardrobe door; it showed herself very trim and well-groomed in a short, grey skirt, fresh white blouse, and a tie the colour of the daffodil stems, fastened with a topaz pin. The sunlight touched her hair and found the gold in the heavy bands; the blackness of her brows made her face seem delicate like a flower. She saw and recognized her beauty of face and form. It was a constant joy to her, part source of her restlessness, her pride, her desires. She smiled at herself gaily.

"Oh, I am good to look at," she said. "I am capable and fit. Why shouldn't I be? and why should I not confess it? Oh, I do want a good time. I want to wander and work. I want to play, too, and be admired. I wonder if John admires me. He says he loves me. But that——"

She turned away, and her glance found the letter on the bed. She reached for it and opened it, standing by the mirror in the light of the sun. It was a short letter.

MY DEAR TAMSIE,—Just a hurried note to tell you two things—both good, I hope you will think. Jeanette has had a second operation. There is every hope that she will fully recover. The doctors at Dyleshart are enthusiastic about her, and certainly if she is cured it will be a triumph for the woman-surgeon. I am coming to see you to-morrow (this is the second bit of news). I have not been to Pendennis all the while you have been there, but I have arranged to get away to-morrow. Don't stay in the house waiting for me. I have no idea when I shall arrive (by motor), and I would like to see you at work.

Mother sends her love, Malcolm kind regards, and I am as always,

Your loving FATHER.

"Hurrah!" cried Thomasine. "He's coming at last. And Jeanette—oh, I am glad! I wonder what she will do. Leave Dyleshart, I should think! I am sure I should, anyway."

She kissed the letter rapturously.

"We'll have a day of it, Dad," she said. "I hope it won't rain. And the daffodils are ripping. He must have heaps to take home. Oh, this is good! Now I shall have some tea. It's five

o'clock, and I have to be at Trekerret by seven, and then drive back with John behind that colt. And I shall be able to tell Dad to-morrow—if only I can explain it to him."

She had just finished her tea when Peter came in.

"Go in to Saltram with me, Tom?" he said. "That is, if you'd like a walk."

"I am going to Trekerret," she answered, finishing a bun. "Going to meet John," she added, with her mouth full.

"Walk? By yourself? Oh, what a shame! I wish I were engaged to you instead of him," he added boyishly.

"It would be fun," she said. "I should not be a bit afraid of you."

"Are you afraid of John?" he asked, stealing the sugar.

Aunt Bess looked up for the answer. She was placidly having tea with Thomasine.

"N-no, not exactly afraid," Thomasine answered. "Only one can't say some things to John."

"Such as——?" Peter seemed quite serious.

"Rude things, words you must not use, and so on," Thomasine answered, fencing.

Peter grinned. "Oh, he thinks girls should be perfect," he said. "No cigarettes, no fooling. Why don't you throw him over?"

Thomasine laughed.

"One can't do that very well," she said. "For one thing, he is so nice, and for another thing, I don't believe he would be thrown over."

" 'He is so nice' is the saving clause," Peter

said. "Well, I shall go to Saltram myself. I may get a puppy while I am there. Pengelley has got some beauties—terriers. And you had better take Blinks with you, Tom."

"Oh yes, I will. And I will start now. 'Bye, Auntie Bess. No, no more tea, thank you. So long, Peter. Do buy a puppy. Buy two."

"I may not buy any," he said. "But if I do it will be mine, not yours."

"Very well, then. I don't want it. Oh, by the way, Dad is coming to-morrow. I had a letter."

"That will be nice," said Auntie Bess. "What time will he come?"

"He doesn't know. And I am to go out and work, anyway. He wants to see me dig. But then, of course, I may have other things to do."

The valley road to Trekerret from Saltram is rough and steep. It winds, it goes up and down, it is lonely. Thomasine buttoned her coat against the wind, pulled down her cap, whistled to Blinks, and set out.

"I shall give John a few clear hints," she said to herself. "It will be dark, and we shall be alone. And then to-morrow I shall tell Dad somehow or other."

The hills rose up on either hand, sometimes wooded with young oaks or pines, sometimes covered with wide fields. Leafless trees grew by the roadside, a little river ran now on the right, now on the left, as it threaded its way through the valley.

Thomasine looked up through the lacework of twigs against the pale sky. Clouds had come up, the sun had sunk beyond the hills, the wind blew

gustily, not cold but rough. The light altogether faded out of the sky, the clouds were dark and burdened with rain. Thomasine rejoiced. She loved this kind of weather. It was quite dark before she had walked the three miles into the town, and the yellow lights shone out about the railway-station and the long street. A spatter of rain fell ; a man's hat was twirled along the pavement. Thomasine grinned as she watched its owner run it down. The gas-jets flickered, the white pavement was covered with large, round spots of rain, windows rattled, a slate fell heavily from a roof and was smashed to pieces in the gutter. Thomasine called Blinks to heel and went on her way. She loved the wind, the rough rain, the rattle and the noise.

The dogcart was waiting at the Post-office ; she saw the colt straining to be off, backing and shifting. She ran the last bit, and John, sitting with the reins taut, looked down at her face, rose-coloured and rain-wet, full of pleasure, the bright hair gleaming in the light of the lamps.

She was up at his side almost at once.

"Let him go," she said. "Blinks is with me."

The colt sprang forward ; they dashed at a furious pace up the street.

"Pull the rug round you," John said. He had plenty to do. "Was it dark coming in? I ought not to have let you come."

"It was fine," she replied. "I like this weather. And I had Blinks, of course. Oh, what a darling ! I was nearly thrown out in the road !"

The dogcart swung and swayed as the colt tore round the corner and down the hill.

"Let's go the high-road!" Thomasine shouted. Wind and wheels and flying hoofs drowned ordinary speech. "There'll be no room in the valley if he is going to cut up like this."

They dashed round another corner. Scarcely any one but themselves was in the streets. The church came into view, its windows alight, its tower looming above the labouring trees.

"Hasn't the wind risen?" Thomasine cried. They were clear of the town; the high-road stretched before them, wide, empty, white, with an occasional cottage or near-lying farmhouse with its stables and barns.

Thomasine swayed. The cart rocked from side to side. John was sitting well back, his hands on the reins, relentlessly firm. Thomasine glanced at him. His face was sharp and clear against the sky—a dark face marked with a line of white, gritted teeth and the shine of eyes. Thomasine thrilled to him. His hands were so steady, so strong, his face so hard and still. And the sky was piled with flying clouds, the wind buffeted them; the road was white, great drops of rain fell and ceased.

If the colt broke away! If John's hands failed him! . . . A glare of light before them, the swift approach of a great car, a purring sound, a long, low rushing movement at one side. . . . The colt's forelegs pawed the air; it bounded forward. Thomasine sat erect, her hands in her lap, while the horse galloped madly, its brown, satiny coat, its bright harness flashing in the light of the lamps.

Speed! Speed with an element of danger! a rocking motion, the race of hoofs on the hard

ground ! And night, and wind, and storm ! Thomasine laughed low in her throat. And a man stronger than danger, than death ; stronger than this magnificent brute, stronger than the night and the storm ! His hands steady on the reins, his face quiet, his teeth showing white. . . .

The colt's pace slackened, the sound of racing hoofs grew regular, the cart ran smoothly. John looked at the girl, saw the laugh on her face, the hands lying still and relaxed in her lap.

He said nothing. The colt shied violently at a caution-board by the roadside. John cut at him with the whip, his left hand strong on the reins. The animal swerved, then the swift but orderly beat of the hoofs went on again.

They pulled up at last in the yard at Pendennis. There was a moving light upstairs ; yellow chinks showed round the kitchen window. Thomasine waited while John got down. Then he came round to her and held out his arms.

He kissed her eyes as he put her down. She looked at him a moment, then, reaching up, she kissed him full on the mouth.

" You—you—" she said, very low, then broke from him and ran into the house.

## CHAPTER XII

"OH, spring will be early this year," said Thomasine. She was going through the orchard to see what damage the storm had done to her beloved trees. "The primroses are coming out, and there are heaps of little blue violets down by the stream in the sun. And here is another fine day, all blue and gold. We are meant just to be happy—I am sure we are—like the daffodils which are joyous in the sun. There was a rough wind last night; yet here they are as joyous as ever! I shall be like that, unafraid of good and bad. We must live our own lives. No one has a right to demand sacrifice from us or to say, 'Think as I do, for I am right.' We are all individual, all different, and that is why the world is so interesting. . . . And I never said a word to John last night, after all! The colt gave me no chance. That was fine, too, and John was fine. I was mad about him for a moment. He makes me feel like that at times, and then he is quiet and ordinary again, and has nothing much to say. . . . Oh, here is a branch torn off! And covered with little buds. This is too bad! Perhaps the others will be all the stronger, though. Oh, what a heavenly day! I wonder what time Dad will arrive. I shall take him away somewhere by

myself this afternoon, and ask him to tell me what I should do with John."

Just about midday Thomasine looked up from where she sat by the daffodils and saw her father coming to her through the trees. He was alone, and while he smiled at her as she ran to him she thought how ill he looked—so worn, with hollow eyes, and the sweetness of his face accentuated.

"Well!" he said, holding her. "They told me I should find you here. You are looking very well. I am glad to see you."

Thomasine thought his manner a little restrained. She could not quite define it. She kissed him ardently, holding him in her strong embrace.

"You are late," she said. "I came out to see the trees after the storm, and then I waited for you because I wanted you to see the daffodils. Have you seen Aunt Bess? Have you seen Uncle? What time did you arrive?"

"I have been here some little while," he said. "I wanted a talk with George, and he was in the house. So it was a good opportunity. Now we will have a nice day, will we not?"

"Yes, what shall we do? What would you like to do?"

"I think we'll come out here with the daffodils after dinner, shall we? This is a holiday for me, so I won't go far. We can sit on the trunk of the pippin. Is it still here? I remember it was blown down long ago, when I was a boy."

"It is still here. Yes, we will come out and sit there. Come and see the garden—and there is a puppy, too. Peter bought it yesterday. John

says he will give me a saddle-horse at the end of the summer. . . . Oh, and Mother ! Is she all right ? And Malcolm, too ? ”

“ Yes, they sent their love. Malcolm is very busy. ”

“ Is he ? Yes, so am I. And I am succeeding, you know, Dad darling. Uncle George has bet me a month's wages that I shall not win at least six prizes at the autumn shows ; but I shall ! He comes and watches me at work, and he laughs. We are good friends, you know ; but I should not like to vex him. He has a temper, you understand. He isn't a bit like you. And then there is Jacob ; he is supposed to help me when I want him, but he is a fool. And, worse than that, he doesn't know he is a fool. ”

Thomasine walked with her arm linked in her father's, her bright face almost on a level with his own. Her brown hands, clasped on his sleeve, were a contrast to his, which were so white and fine, but long and narrow also, as his were.

“ What do you like best ? ” he asked her as they turned into the kitchen garden.

“ Trees, ” she said. “ There you have a real woman's work. Pruning, and grafting, and nursing, and nourishing ; they are just like children in their demand for love and care—better than children. And they are more useful than flowers, and more interesting than vegetables. Oh, you must come in April or May and see them in blossom ; there will be such heaps of blossom. ”

He said nothing to this. He walked with her about the garden, listening to her chatter, watching her, his eyes shadowed, his face so white and

worn beside hers. She could not but notice how ill he looked.

"Why are you looking so ill?" she said. "Have you been over-working? I do wish you would come and stay here for a week. You shall do no work when I have my home. You shall come and live with me. Do you remember all my castles in the air? You shall yet sit in my Jacobean room with the embroideries, and the pewter, and the carvings all about you. You shall go and play golf, or you shall ride or drive or go about in my little boat—it will have a white sail and a little red pennon—and be ever so happy. Oh, I do wish I had it now. Perhaps I shall never have it."

He said nothing. Only he watched her. His face was strangely wistful.

"Is anything wrong, Dad?" the girl asked, then rattled on: "but you will tell me all about it? This afternoon in the orchard, you know, when we are alone. I don't like to see you looking so ill and worried—no, not worried exactly, but ill. Anyway, darling, you shall tell me, and I will make it all right. I can do lots of things, and if I can't help this time I can comfort you."

"You can comfort me, Tamsie, if you like," he said. "I will tell you this afternoon. Now we should go in, should we not? It is one o'clock."

They went in together through the front door, where the new puppy was at war with the mat. Thomasine snatched him up and they entered the dining-room—the girl first, the man a little behind her.

Aunt Bess was there; the dinner on the table;

Peter by the window busy with a needle and a thorn in his finger. Perhaps this accounted for his contracted brow and sober face. Aunt Bess looked up with a little start, and Thomasine's voice sounded shrill in the curious silence which seemed to be in the room.

"Oh, he does bite!" she said, holding out the puppy. "Peter, look at him! Yes, and take him away. I must go upstairs and brush my hair before I can have dinner. Dad, sit next to me, dear."

They heard her race upstairs two steps at a time, whistling gaily. It was a tuneful whistle. She left the door of her room wide open, and there floated down to the dining-room the sound of a blackbird practising a love-song in springtime.

"She is clever like that," Aunt Bess said, as though excusing her.

"Dad and I are going to sit on the old pippin in the orchard with the daffodils," said Thomasine as she took her place at the table. "No one else can be admitted, and we shall not be in till tea-time."

They were all there now, and all strangely silent. No one looked at the girl except Uncle George, who regarded her once with a singular penetration. It was as though he searched her.

She had a great deal to say, and she said it at length. When she appealed directly to any one the answer was given briefly and in a low voice. Yet, before the meal was over, her father was gay also as she was, laughing at her, adding to her nonsense, so that between them the strange silence was broken, the gravity dispersed.

"Now for the orchard and the daffodils," Thomasine said as she stood up. "Or would you like to rest first or smoke or anything?"

"No, I am ready now," he said, and got up.

"Very well, then, come along. Shall we take the puppy? No, I don't think we will; he is sure to behave badly. We shall be back at five o'clock; see, Auntie?"

"Yes, my dear; I shall be waiting for you."

They went out together, and, in passing, Thomasine caught John's gaze upon her. It startled her. She could not define it. It seemed full of pity, of dread, of commiseration, of longing, too, and love.

She turned upon him roughly. "What is the matter?" she said. She resented that expression. She glanced round. Aunt Bess looked startled and nervous. Peter was frowning heavily; he had not got up. Uncle George had his back to her. It was a critical moment.

"It is all right," John said. His voice was unsteady.

Dr. Latimer was outside the door.

"Come, Tamsie," he said, and she went out to him.

"Why did John look at me like that?" she demanded.

He slipped his arm through hers.

"I did not see how he looked," he said as he led her into the garden. "Let us go to our tree and sit down."

They returned to the orchard, where the daffodils were dancing and the birds were fluttering in the grey branches of the trees.

"You see," said Thomasine, looking up, "I removed all the lichens. They are all very healthy now, aren't they? And I shall feed them all through the blossom-time, because it takes so much out of a tree. Now sit down, darling—there, lean back against that other branch. Is that nice?"

"Yes, very nice," he said. "But don't sit on the ground. It is damp."

"I often sit on the damp ground; I like it. Why do I like it, do you suppose? Soil, and sun, and trees, and the wind, and rain, and daffodils?"

"It is inbred," he said. "Just as your restlessness is inbred, and your courage."

"Am I restless?" she said. "Yes, I suppose I am. I want to go about and see the world. . . . Tell me about Jeanette. Is she better?"

"Yes, much better. There is every hope for her. The Dyleshart surgeons have done wonders."

"I am so glad! What is Dyleshart like? I have asked you before. Do tell me. It is a woman's colony, is it not—cut-and-dried and moulded to a pattern? And Jeanette is there, and Mrs. Barrow, and Isobel Wane, and Mrs. Warren, too. What a lot of people that I know are at Dyleshart!"

"Yes. But it is not in the least cut-and-dried, as you imagine."

"Tell me, then."

"Dyleshart is a woman's colony founded by the Countess of Canis, who succeeded in persuading the English Government to give her schemes a trial. But one day you may go there and see it for yourself."

Thomasine lay on the mossy ground, her arm on

the trunk where her father sat, her face sideways on her arm, her eyes on the flowers.

"I expect it is dull and strict," she said. "No fun, no play, no anything."

"Wait till you see it," he answered. "Play and sport and pageantry are all included at Dyleshart. . . . Yet it could not satisfy you, Tamsie. When you reach yourself you will find that you are a man's woman, to be loved and cared for and ruled by a man."

"Then why praise it?" she said.

"Because it is good," he answered. "Because it is there—a refuge for all good women—a clean, fine, magnificent institution."

She was silent a while.

"Well, I will go there, perhaps, and see Jeanette," she said. She looked up at him. "How tired you look! Tell me what you promised you would."

He was silent now. His eyes were wistful. He moved his hand towards her, then drew it back.

"Tamsie, do you remember the old, old talks of ideals?" he said at last.

She nodded. Her gaze had fallen to the flowers.

"What we said of unavoidable trouble? That it is an honour?"

She nodded, still quiet.

"And you said you would remember—that you are ready for anything. We agreed that God is good and that all things happen for good—things we can't help."

Again she nodded.

"And that we should not grieve for our dead, for they are happy?"

Thomasine started and turned so that she faced him ; her eyes widened, the yellow in them shone out in the sunlight.

"What is it?" she breathed.

He knew there was nothing morbid in her—he had safeguarded her from that, even though in so doing he had pandered to a folly. He straightened himself. His eyes were on hers, holding her.

"Steady!" he said. "I am going to give you a blow. I want you to face it with splendid courage. I want to see you as I have pictured you—gallant, erect, brave."

"Tell me," she whispered. The startled look was gone from her face, her eyes were not so wide.

"It is of myself," he said. And then he told her.

She did not cry out ; she sat as though turned to stone, the colour fading from her face, her eyes full of terror. All the light of the sun, the dancing yellow daffodils, the birds, the trees, were shut out—she saw only his face, white and worn, with wistful eyes full of tenderness, and then, before she could speak, his voice again reached her.

"You see," he said, "these things have to be. If it were not now, it would have to be faced later. And it would not be any easier then. I have told you this, Tamsie, because I felt that I could help you to see it as you should. I don't think I am wrong in telling you." He waited a moment. "Am I?" he said then.

Thomasine shivered. She could not yet see anything but his face, hear anything but the tones of his voice. She was motionless, numbed.

"Tamsie!" he said, the old note of recall in his voice.

Her expression changed ; her eyes met his a moment in the old way as in salute. Then she was close to him, her arms about him.

" Oh, Dad ! oh, Dad ! " she panted. He held her.

" My dear ! " he said, still speaking in that low, steady voice. " I knew this must come—I knew before you went away. So I watched you when I told you of Jeanette. It seemed to me an opportunity for giving you the idea I wanted you to have in your mind. And you agreed with me—you told me you had courage for everything, that trouble was an honour, a discipline, because God thinks us worthy to endure. And we agreed that those who have gone out have gone to a great happiness, because God Himself is good and He would not have us grieve ; He would not have any bitterness in our hearts because He has for a little while separated those who love each other. And, Tamsie, my dear, if you believed this in theory, if it seemed a good idea to you, you will practise it now. If you do not I shall regret having told you."

" It—it is difficult," she panted. " Oh, I have not any courage ! I did not expect anything like this ! "

" What did you expect ? " he asked.

She broke into passionate weeping, clinging to him, kissing him.

" Tamsie—oh, my dear girl, be still ! What good does this do ? Hush ! you will make yourself ill ; you will wear yourself out."

" Oh, is there nothing I can do ? If I could suffer instead ! I cannot bear it—I cannot bear it !

I cannot let you go. Oh, Dad, what shall I do? What shall I do? Do you think God will hear if I ask Him not to let this be? Oh, tell me what to do—tell me what to do !”

“ Give me your hands—there. Now lean against my arm—no, you are not in the least too heavy. . . . Now I am going to talk to you. Just lie like that and listen. You cannot do anything, dear. You can only be brave and send me out unafraid. I want you to look at me in the old way, your eyes on mine in salute. Then I shall go, and you will fight on till the order comes to you as well. Don't you see it, dear? You see, it is no good to beat yourself against the Gate of Life and Death—for it is the same Gate—you will only be bruised. I want you to think I am only on the other side, where my mother is now. Ah, Tamsie, she would not have cried out. I wish she were here with you. She could tell you so much better than I can. But I think you will find her ideals for yourself, and love and believe in them as she did.”

He looked out across the daffodils as they quivered in the wind and the sun. Life, young life, youth, was all about him—the sun was warm, the spring full of joy and new growth ; yet he sat amongst the flowers and birds and talked placidly of death ; he looked out at all that gay carelessness and spoke of beliefs too difficult, it seemed, for truth.

“ You are a little like her, Tamsie,” he said, taking up his words again. “ She loved glory, and beauty, and colour, as you do ; she loved the open air, and the countryside, and the flowers, and the sun. She was brave and strong ; she was

unafraid. But you are restless too—you find the lightest fetters irksome. Not duty but joy, not patience but accomplishment, make up the sum of your existence. Not quiet hours, not dreams and idle days, but force, work, and toil. But, dear, you will have to learn to bear the things you dislike, to do that which wearies you, to sit sometimes with idle hands and look on at the game. You have courage for big deeds—sheer blind heroism sometimes, but no pluck to bear the slowness, the irritation of every day. I tell you this, Tamsie, because you will find that I am right. You may desire a great career, but for all that I say you will be finer when you give up your dreams and follow the commonplace road, outwardly an ordinary woman. Not so gay to look on, perhaps, not so seemingly gallant, but cut down to the pattern which is standard for the world.”

Again he was quiet, and the girl was very still. Even now she could not realize what he had told her—could not believe that such a thing could come to pass. She had said lightly that she would face anything, and lo! here was Death to face—and not for herself, but, worse than that, for one she loved.

And what would she do when he had gone? Who would listen and understand? Who would be left to her for herself out of all the world?

“Of course, it is not so easy to go,” he went on, for he also had that splendid courage of which he spoke; he also could be relentlessly brave for an ideal. “One has so much to leave. I wish I could see the boys safely grown up and at work and you married to John. Ah, that engagement

of yours is good. John, though your cousin, has none of your restlessness or impatience. He is more stolid, more sure. But he loves colour, too, as you do, and beauty and life, and the things that matter. It is all inbred. So in the good things you are alike, and he has what you lack and will steady you. You will have altered your dreams, reconstructed your fancies, now your outlook has changed. You must tell me your new plans."

He had talked on steadily in his quiet way, soothing her, putting thoughts into her mind, giving her time to gather her strength. But she was very quiet. He waited a long time, but she made no answer.

"Tamsie, you do not wish I had not told you?" he asked her at last. "You would not have been left in ignorance? The boys do not know as yet—they are younger, and it is different. I told your Uncle George and Aunt Bess this morning, and I think John and Peter know—your mother, of course, but no one else."

Thomasine moved a little so that he saw her face. It was very pale but quite quiet, and her voice, as she answered, was clear and strangely sweet.

"I could not have borne it if you had not told me," she said. "You have made it seem not terrible at all. I cannot realize all that it will mean to me—I cannot think of myself yet. It is as though all the world had changed and nothing is real any more. . . . Darling, I will not make any trouble for you. I can be brave. And I will marry John before—before—oh, any time you like!"

"That will make me very happy," he said. "Of course, you are very young, but you are sure, are you not? And then there will be some one to take care of you. You can see what John thinks, but no doubt he will say something to you about it, for he mentioned it to me this morning—his hopes of an early marriage. He did not know of this. He said he was considering a farm near Saltram—Bonnoc End—which will be ready at mid-summer. He thought you might be married then, but now——"

The girl's eyes did not flinch. He spoke to her as though he made arrangements for a long journey. Yet he was only going through the Gate of Life and Death; but, then, though one may return from a journey, one can never pass back again through that Gateway which divides the worlds.

"When shall it be?" she asked.

"Next month," he answered, after a moment.

"At Easter."

"The second week in April," she said. Her eyes left his face. The daffodils danced, the primroses were here; at Easter she would be a bride, and before the bluebells came he would be . . .

She looked back at him.

"And that is all?" she said. "Just that will make you happy about me?"

"Yes," he said; "but not unless you are sure."

Again a long pause.

"Dad, you won't fear when——"

"No, I think not. One can look at it, you know, because one cannot quite grasp what it all means. But one cannot say how one will act at

the moment. Yet I do not think I shall have any fear."

"And you are sure of afterwards?"

"I am sure that what happens will be right and good, for that is the promise. I see no reason to believe the stuff one is offered nowadays—when one comes to a fact of this kind one puts away all but the given word. Yes, I am sure—sure that all will be well with me there and you here."

Thomasine stood up, and as he rose he noticed again that her eyes were almost on a level with his own. Her hand gripped his, her head was erect. Not realization but imagination swayed the girl.

"Then it will be all right," she said. "You will go through the Gate and I shall stay. But my sword-arm is strong, darling, and you are tired."

## CHAPTER XIII

THE August sun was setting over the harvest fields, where the yellow corn stood in rows of piled sheaves. The reaping machine, with John Latimer perched on the little seat behind the great horses, clacked round the last square patch of standing grain, from the shelter of which darted frightened rabbits, now here, now there, to be laid low by a blow of a stick as they fled across the stubble.

"First field nearly done," said John, turning the horses at the corner. "Tell Pengelley to come up to supper with the men, Jim. Come up there, Molly!"

The sun shone on his face as he turned towards the west—a thin, brown face with a clear, hard outline and strong features. The sun found the circle of yellow around the pupils of his eyes, and the white, even teeth as he called to the horses or the men. His shirt was open at the throat, his neck brown, his bare arms tanned, the hair on them yellow in the light. Between his brows was a deeply bitten vertical line, and his lips, when closed, were straight and hard.

The last of the corn fell from the binder, was snatched up, and placed with the sheaves. John dismounted from his perch and looked appreciatively across the yellow field.

"That's a good job done," he said, leading the horses to the edge. He stayed awhile giving final orders, paying off some of the men. Then he took up his coat and put it on and went, cap in hand, the light on his face, to the gate where Thomasine awaited him.

He smiled at her as he reached her.

"Did you come to meet me?" he said.

"I came to watch," she answered. "I could not get away before, what with one thing and another. There is so much cooking to do with the men coming up to the house. And the milk came in late. I have only now finished in the dairy. And I am so tired."

"Isn't Polly any good, then?"

"Oh, she is better than the creature we had before. She was so rude. I shall sack Polly just as sharp if she takes that tone. But, of course, I have to do a lot, and superintend. And she is so slow, and you know I am not very fond of the house. I should have loved driving the reaper. Oh, I do wish I might. John, why can't I garden, and work in the orchards, and have another woman in the house? . . . Suppose I can't, though. You wouldn't like that."

He slipped his arm through hers as they climbed the hill to the farm. Thomasine turned aside from him and stood by a gate looking out to the sea, her back towards him, the light on her hair. He watched her; he said nothing, neither did he touch her.

She swung round on him suddenly, and the light of the setting sun, shining from his place low in the sky, was full on her face, in her eyes. She

laughed as though her irritation and weariness were forgotten.

"Let us go in and have supper," she said, "then ride."

"Ride?" he repeated. "I don't think I can to-night. But let us have supper by all means."

"Why can't you ride to-night?" she asked, and her brows met

"It is seven-thirty now, dear, and we should not be ready for an hour or more. And I shall have to go round the farm again. There is a cow in the shed in the home field—I must see her. There is no time for ordinary work these busy days."

"Very well, then I shall ride alone."

He said nothing to that, but walked on at her side to the long grey gate in the dusty hedge by which one entered the farmyard. She passed quickly through the wicket in the wall to the house.

Supper for two had been laid in the dining-room; the lamp on the table gave a cheerful welcome to the man as he entered. Thomasine was not there.

He sat down a little wearily in his leather arm-chair by the darkling window. A gentle wind blew in to him, full of the scent of the lemon verbenä. A great bush of it grew just outside and the window was open.

He looked across the room at the supper table. It was bright and gay with a scarlet geranium in a pot, the lighted lamp, and snowy cloth. Everything seemed so inviting, and yet—the line between his brows was deep, and his mouth was hard.

He heard Thomasine on the stairs whistling softly. She would never lose that trick of hers. She went into the kitchen; he heard her voice there, and then she entered the room where he awaited her.

"Come along, quickly," she cried. "Let us have supper. I went up to change my skirt so that I should lose no time. Yes, give me some pie, please. What will you drink? Cider? Very well, it is in that jug. Oh, that reminds me—Uncle George owes me twenty-four shillings, because I won more than six prizes at the show. I bet him I would. He won eight really, but three were for cattle, four were for fruit, and one for potatoes. The cattle don't count, of course, but with the November show he will have won more than six through me."

John looked at her vivid face. All her petulance was gone; she was radiant.

"I wonder if he will pay up," he said.

"He ought to. I gave the things a good start, so it really was my doing, and Jacob is afraid to go playing the fool since I dressed him down that day. Besides, I want the money; I am always in want of money."

"Well, ask me for it, then."

"No, I don't like to do that," she answered, and grew thoughtful. "No, I will take only the allowance we agreed upon. I'd much rather earn it, you know, and I think I do earn what I get, do I not?"

"I wish you would not talk like that. You earn nothing; you receive. Everything is as much yours as mine."

"Oh, no, rubbish! I didn't marry you for what I could get. That is such a wrong idea, for, of course, everything is technically yours. Oh, John, I have explained this to you before. I don't think a man should give all and the wife receive all. Mine is mine and yours is yours, and we are not in the least accountable to one another."

"Why did you marry me?" he asked, after a time.

She looked up, startled. The brightness faded out of her face. She looked frightened, as she had on her wedding-day, when she was his bride. She had been so quiet—there had been no weeping, no outcry for her father. He remembered he had thought her brave—too brave, even a little hard.

She did not answer his question; she pushed back her plate and rose.

"I am going to ride," she said. "You can help yourself, can't you? If I wait I shall be late. I want to see the moon rise from the cliffs."

"Hadn't I better come?" he asked, looking round at her.

"No, thanks. Go and see your cow. I want to be alone."

"I am sure I had better come," he said.

"No. I won't go if you do. I want to be alone."

"You won't be long, will you?"

"Oh, I shall come back when I am tired. Go up to bed if I am late."

"You know I can't do that," he began. "You can't go about by yourself at night. Don't go, Tom."

"I shall go. I shall do as I like. I am not afraid. There—sit down again. Good-bye."

She swung round upon him, rumpled his hair with her hand, and kissed him on the lips.

Then he heard her in the hall putting on her coat, then her footsteps on the flagged path outside the open house-door. He turned his head towards the window, the short curtains moved in the little breeze, the scent of the verbenā came in to him in waves of sweetness. The silence was so deep that he could hear the soft sound of the sea.

Thomāsine did not pass the window, but, presently, he heard the distant sound of galloping hoofs. He turned back to the table where the scarlet geranium stood out—a blaze of brilliant colour in the yellow light. . . . She had not finished her supper; her plate was almost untouched, but her glass was empty. Oh, women were unaccountable! Why must she ride to-night? Why had he no control over her? Why did she not consider him?

She whistled about the house—a trick he had loved in her, but which gave her an ill prestige with the servants and the men. It was so natural for her to whistle, but they could not understand. . . . And her moods, her sudden impulses, her impatience of any restraint, her irritation at any slowness on the part of others—oh, how could a man understand?

He got up from the table, his own supper scarcely touched. Then he remembered the maid-servant would see the plates, that she would think something was wrong, that there would be talk

on the farm and in Saltram. He emptied both plates into a piece of newspaper and went out, calling the dogs.

The moon was rising beyond the hills. She came up, huge, orange-coloured, flooding the land with light. He needed no lantern as he went out to the shed in the field.

Why had Tom married him? Did she love him? Could she, if she loved him, treat him as she did—disobey and displease him, hurt him even, then pass her hand lightly over his hair and kiss him contemptuously full on the lips? The insolence of those kisses!

Not once had she broken down before him or asked comfort from him in her grief. She had come back from the orchard that sweet March day, very quiet and very pale, her eyes calm, her voice steady. She had made no outcry at all, she seemed to have shed no tears, to have no regrets.

And yet—was she so hard when she loved what he loved, when her hands could be so gentle, her voice so sweet?

He came back to the gate where she had stayed with her back to the sun. He leaned against it with his face to the shining east.

The great moon rose up in the sapphire sky; the sea, spread before him, was flooded with her light. Something in the silver mystery gripped the man, marked as he was with the yellow brand of the breed which loved the real things of the world.

He turned so that his hands touched the gate, then vaulted over, and ran back to the farm.

It was dark in the stables. He went out again

with quick steps, saddle and bridle over his shoulder, his face alight.

The mare in the meadow below the garden !  
How the moonlight shone on the windows of the long, low house, making them flash like shields hung up in time of peace ! The sweet-peas by the wall, the roses over the door, the stocks in the beds on the lawn—how their scent went up like incense in the warm night !

He called the mare and she came to him, her soft nose, dew-wet, pushed against his face. Quickly saddle and bit and bridle were adjusted, the man's fingers trembling in his haste. He swung himself up, the meadow gate shut noisily as he kicked it with his heel in riding by, and the sound of flying hoofs rang through the stillness as he galloped up the road to the cliffs.

## CHAPTER XIV.

THOMASINE was not on the cliffs.

John Latimer rode over the short grass, over the heather and tufts of sea-pinks, while the moon swung high above him and the sea below him shimmered and sobbed as the tide receded, leaving the sands wet and dark.

He rode with the reins lying loosely on the mare's neck, his eyes straining for a sight of the girl who was nowhere to be seen.

He turned off the cliff and went down by a bridle path to the beach, and rode towards the east. Once he called her, but only the echoes answered him and the sound of the sea.

"She had Tim," he said to himself. Tim had been the puppy at Pendennis.

His excitement, his eagerness died. His eyes grew heavy with weariness, the little wind blew cold, the silver light of the moon was bright and hard. There was no mystery, no delight.

He turned the mare and rode back slowly along the beach, downcast, his chin on his breast. Then he saw the marks of hoofs in the wet sand—flying hoofs going west.

Then she had passed this way! She had come down the path and ridden west, not east. The marks in the sand told of a galloping horse; she had gone back, then, she had gone back

almost at once—perhaps to please him, because he had asked her.

The mare bounded forward at the touch of his foot, the sand spurted about the flying hoofs; the man she carried rode well forward, his face in the shadow, his teeth showing white.

Now they were off the sand and on the road, now between high hedges, now breasting the hill. They passed the field where the corn stood in orderly rows, passed the gate where, resting a moment, she had turned to announce her desire to ride at moonrise. So he reached the grey gate and the yard.

He found the house-door on the latch, and everything very quiet when he entered. In the dining-room was a glimmer as of candle-light.

He went there. The lamp was turned low and flickering; there was meat and drink on the table, carefully laid. The scarlet geranium glowed in the half-darkness; a small cocked-hat note lay by his plate. He opened it.

Buck up! I am home first. Have some more supper, and come up to me.

TOM.

He crushed the note against his lips, while his hands trembled. Thomasine had drawn the sword from its sheath again.

And she was awaiting him in the moonlight, her bright hair all about her, her face white as her nightgown, her lips and eyes dark like blots.

"Oh, Tom!" he said brokenly. And she, seeing the glory of his face, laughed low in her throat exultingly, her hands clasped about his neck.

## CHAPTER XV

" I AM driving into Saltram to meet Jeanette and the others at three o'clock," said Thomasine.

" Very well," John answered. " Could you find time to sew on a few buttons for me first? "

" Oh, I'm sure I don't know ! What sort of buttons? How helpless you are ! Surely you can do a simple thing like that for yourself, can't you? I haven't a moment to spare."

She had been playing golf all the morning—an October morning, gorgeous as it had been that day a year ago when she had come face to face with herself and, finding herself fit, had started gaily on a career.

But all her plans had come to nothing, all her castles in the air had fallen in the dust. She had escaped from one drudgery to meet another, from which there seemed to be no escape. Life, having opened out joyously, had closed down again, crushing her into a groove. And John could not understand.

" You like the country," he had said. " You like dogs and horses and all that. Well, then ! "

" But I have told you," she had answered, " that that is all very well. I *don't* like housework, and cooking, and mending, and maids. I want to play golf ; I want to do all manner of things. And I can't. I am tied here hand and foot. If I go

and do the things I want to do, the things I ought to do are left undone, and then everything is unpleasant. No matter how nice a place may be I don't want to live in it for ever."

"But you are so impatient. You will have a holiday from time to time."

"Oh, don't reason with me! What sort of holiday? A visit to Mother at Plymouth, or to some friend or other who will do all the proper things. I don't want to do proper things; I want to do as I want."

And here was John spoiling all the joy of the morning by asking her as soon as she came in to sew on buttons!

Playing golf, too! So difficult as it had been to get the chance of a game in the first place when one had to pay for one's clubs and clothes and subscriptions out of an inadequate allowance. What a curse was a conscience! How could one take a man's money to drivel away on pleasure—pleasure in which he had no part?

Why had he no part in it, by the way? Why did not John play golf? Why would he not act unexpectedly at unexpected moments, just as one desired? He was so quiet, so sober, so old. Yet he was only twenty-nine.

There came another memory to add to her irritation—the memory of her Uncle's expression when she came in one evening full of happiness after a race across the sands with the dogs. Of course there were any amount of things needing attention, and he knew of them. So he had looked at her with hard eyes, not laughing at her at all, not in the least amused or pleased.

"Pooh! Why shouldn't I?" she had said. "If John does not like me to go alone, why does he not come too?"

"John is a farmer," Uncle George had answered, just as though being a farmer, or a farmer's wife, meant that one must attend to all sorts of tiresome things when all the world was for pleasure and the game was close at hand.

"I am young! I am young!" she had cried to herself one night, playing on the cliffs in the wind. "Oh, let me play, and I *do* work—I love work, but not when it becomes a tie, a burden."

And now to-day Jeanette was coming with her mother and Isobel Wane.

"For I will make you quite strong again," Thomasine had written with a flourish, inviting Jeanette from Dyleshart. "I would have come to Dyleshart to see you, but there has been no opportunity at all. But come and stay with me; it can be jolly here."

So Thomasine sat down to dinner with John. She threw her coat and cap across the room, ran her fingers through her hair, and sat down.

"It was simply ripping on the links," she said. "No one was about but just myself, and I had all the lovely morning to enjoy. . . . Oh, Polly sacked me last night. Did I tell you? She was awfully impudent—has been on and off for some time. Said she liked a respectable mistress. She really did say it, John. I am sure I don't know what she meant, unless she is shocked because I ride Gay Boy astride. It isn't her business, anyway, and, though I like side-saddles better, it is jolly astride. Makes one feel so—so boyish. Yes,

that is just the word. Anyway, Polly is going at the end of her month. According to her, all Saltram is discussing me. But I don't worry, though I think people might mind their own business, don't you? Oh, John, don't look so vexed! I am really doing very well. I like to see the house in order, though I wish some one else would attend to it when I want to go out. . . . And I'll sew on your buttons for you. Now smile!"

So John smiled accordingly, and Thomasine, having finished her dinner, picked up her hat and coat and went into the kitchen.

"Have you made any scones, Polly?" she demanded.

Polly said she had not, and continued to gnaw a bone from her plate, with her elbows on the table. Two of the men from the farm, who were sitting in the wide window-seat having their dinner, looked at the young mistress confronting them.

"But why haven't you?" Thomasine asked. "Haven't you made any cake either? What on earth have you been doing all the morning?"

"Cookin' the dinner and clanin' the bedroom," Polly answered stolidly.

"Which bedroom?"

"One over the porch."

"And only that one? There were three to be done. I am waiting to go up and put on clean covers. Mrs. Barrow will be here at four o'clock."

Polly said nothing. Her round, red face grew yet redder under her mistress's gaze. The men watched Thomasine.

"I am sure I don't know what I shall do," she said. "Do get the kitchen tidy. I suppose I must

make the scones myself before I go. Oh, you are such a nuisance ! ”

She turned on her heel and went out, her brows meeting, her eyes shadowed. John was in the dining-room ; he came out to her.

“ I am going down about the cider-press,” he said. “ And then I shall be carting roots. I will come in early, though, if you like.”

“ Oh, don't bother me ! I have no end of things to do ! ” she stormed, and swept past him to the stairs.

Her eyes were full of tears, but she would not let him see. She bit her lip with her teeth so that the blood came. She despised crying women. Tears were so futile. And yet, when she saw the guest-rooms and the work to be done, the half-brushed floors, and the ill-made beds the tears vanished. She was essentially energetic, disorder was intolerable.

So for a long, warm hour she toiled in the three pretty rooms, sweeping, bedmaking, dusting, arranging, till at last her anger and distress passed in a feeling of pride and satisfaction.

“ I am worth ten of that woman ! ” she said, as she took a last survey. “ I do wish the days were long enough for all one has to do. . . . Oh, my hair ! I shall never be ready. The scones must wait till to-morrow. It is bread day to-morrow, too. I wonder what I shall do with Polly while Jeanette is here. I suppose the house will be upside down if I go out. Bother it all ! ”

She loosened and brushed her hair before the glass in her own room. Her eyes filled again, unaccountably.

"Oh, Dad!" she cried to herself. "I have married him. I was brave. You know it made you so happy. Oh, I do wish you were here. No one gives me a good idea of myself any more. John is not pleased; I know he is not pleased. He is so disappointed in me. Did he think because I am good to look at and able to do things that I should make a good wife? . . . Oh, I am so miserable! I am nearly torn in two. And nobody cares—only as long as I sew on buttons and cook and dust. Dad, *darling*, I *wish* you were here! Nothing happens now at all. And God does not think me worth while either. He is passing me over, though you said you hoped He would not."

She was crying suddenly, her throat quivering with great sobs. There was no stemming the flow of tears. She wept with her face hidden in her hands against the foot of the bed. Her world was too commonplace for heroism, for fine deeds. Trivialities filled the days. This was not Life as she had pictured it, neither Life the radiant nor Life the brave. Everything was so petty; enjoyable things were wrong and led one into trouble; youth and strength and beauty were being sacrificed—for what?

What was the good of it all? Where did it lead? To a quiet old age, to peace—peace in this wonderful world, to dullness and content—from which deliver us, O Lord!

The thoughts in her mind grew chaotic; she could not think any more, she could only weep. And John, coming in to ask for his most necessary buttons, stood by the door, startled; the frown

lifted from his face, his jaw dropped. He had never before seen her cry.

"Tom!" he exclaimed, then went to her. "My dear girl, what is it?"

He tried to lift her so that she could lean against him while he offered comfort. Her fingers clenched on the rail of the bed, and she fought for control, resisting him. He watched her, dismayed, silent. He had no idea what to do. She turned away from him to the window, and stood there looking out, her back towards him.

"Tom, what is it?" he asked awkwardly.

"N-nothing," she answered. A sob choked her. "Go away!" she said fiercely. "Go away at once!"

"But what is it? Are you ill? Are you tired? Tell me what it is."

Does a woman know what it is that makes her cry? If she does not know herself, how can she explain to any one else—more especially to a stupid man? Thomasine felt reasonably angry. A man should not ask questions; if he loves a woman, he should put his arms round her and hold her even if she resists, for love should make a man wise. But John was not wise; yet he loved Thomasine.

"Go away!" she cried. She wheeled round on him, her eyes blazing, her face stained with tears. "Go away at once! I don't want you here!"

"But can't I do anything?" he asked.

"No. Go away!"

So he went, for he had much to learn.

Presently she passed him as he went out to the

field where the swedes were lying in orderly rows waiting to be carted away. He heard the sound of light wheels behind him ; he looked back and saw her erect in the dogcart, driving fast. He drew into the hedge and looked up at her as she flashed by, the colour in her cheek, her eyes steady. She did not look at him.

He watched her as she disappeared up the road—a gay figure, very gallant, very uncompromising. Then he saw her cut at the horse with the whip, and so she passed from his sight round the corner of the road.

## CHAPTER XVI

JOHN LATIMER was a sorely tried man. What was he to do with Thomasine? If she did not love him, why had she married him? And, supposing she did not, why did she sometimes hold him with her arms about him, laughing low in her throat, kissing his lips?

Sometimes Thomasine would make life seem wonderful, radiant, too beautiful to be real. Brief moments were these, for she was so often angry, or indifferent, or sad. Then, again, why had she married him?

He thought of her all that warm October afternoon as he carted roots under the gorgeous trees. He thought of her driving past him with averted face. She had cut at the horse ; he had seen that. Perhaps she had imagined herself already out of his sight.

He thought of her as he had seen her at night in the pale dark, white-clad, with soft, fragrant hair about her, her hands in his, her lips returning his kisses. And she had laughed her low, glad laugh, like the lovenote of a sleepy bird in the woods. He thought of her in the shed that bitter January day, kneeling by the straw, her fingers wet with milk, while the lamb bleated and the ewe looked on with placid eyes. And then he had drawn her back into his arms——

And that first kiss, passion-hot, at dawn in the kitchen by the glowing fire . . . and herself dancing in the lamplight, her hair jewelled with rain, her face alluring, insolent, alight.

His face changed not at all as he thought ; it was hard and set. He kept his feelings, his passions, hidden in his heart, beaten down and gripped. Yet Thomasine at a touch, a word, a glance, could release them—could draw the sword. It was part of the game.

He returned to the house while the red light of the sunset yet flamed in the sky beyond the black pines. The sea sobbed fitfully ; there was the sound of men's voices, of the hoofs of horses on the paved floor of the stables as he came into the yard. The lights in the house shone out yellow and warm. He waited, his hand on the latch, hesitating like a man in doubt, perhaps afraid.

Thomasine greeted him at the supper-table, where the cloth was laid for five. Her voice was light, her lips smiled, but her eyes were shadowed as though the cause which had drawn the tears had not been removed.

She held out her hand to him as though she asked forgiveness ; her fingers gripped his with warmth, and her voice was gay.

" This is John," she said. " And John, this is Mrs. Barrow, this Mrs. Wane, and this Jeanette. Now let us sit down. Jeanette will sit next to me, and John will go at the top. You see, there are only two of us generally, so we sit next to one another. And you are my first visitors, so please enjoy yourselves and do just what you like. Then I shall be happy."

"Are we really your first visitors?" Mrs. Barrow asked. She had a soft voice. John looked at and liked her face, with its pallor, its kindly lines, its crown of white hair. He glanced from her to Mrs. Wane—small and dark, with brilliant eyes and a mouth which might easily have passed the line dividing a sense of humour from bitterness. He looked at Jeanette and met her gaze frankly. He thought her very pale, but neither ill nor worn. She was small and slight and fair, with great, sad eyes under delicate brows. She smiled a little at his regard, and her colour rose faintly.

Then he looked at his wife, brilliant, beautiful, so radiantly young, so much to be desired.

"Are we really your first visitors?" Mrs. Barrow asked.

"Oh, of course, Mother was here. She came in June. And the boys came in August for two weeks. But they don't count."

"I did not see your mother as we came down. We only stayed one night in Plymouth with Isobel, who left Dyleshart last week. Your mother is keeping well?"

"Pretty well, I believe. We thought she would go to Dyleshart herself, but she says not. She wants to keep the house for the boys just the same. But she will have little opportunity, for they are all going away. Roger is going to India if he can get into one of the banks in Calcutta—you know Uncle Robert is in Calcutta. And Hugh and Bertie are going away, too. Hugh is being prepared for a post in wireless telegraphy. Bertie hasn't decided. Malcolm is going in the

Navy. He is mad about guns, and his godfather says he will give Malcolm all the start he wants, which is lucky for him, as he is the youngest. So Mother has only Bertie to settle. . . . Oh, those boys will have such a time of it! They will go about the world, they will see events, they will have so many interests. I do wish I were a boy! They don't seem to have any restrictions at all."

Mrs. Barrow laughed gently. Isobel Wane looked at Thomasine as though something in the words, or the tone in which they were uttered, called for attention.

"Men have a much harder time," Mrs. Barrow said.

"Do you think so, really? But they have so much that compensates. Oh, I am sure they have the best time."

"It is so much better to be taken care of," Mrs. Barrow said, with complete assurance.

"Oh, we women have to do our part," Thomasine answered. "Men are so helpless. Why, John cannot sew on a button for himself."

She laughed as she spoke and met her husband's upward glance. Isobel Wane still watched Thomasine.

"You must be awfully happy here," said Jeanette, a little wistfully. "You always loved the country, and you can have everything your own way now you are married."

"Oh no, I can't. There is so much to do on a farm, so many responsibilities—" She broke off sharply. "But you will have some of this fruit, Jeanette?" she said. The shadow was still in her eyes.

"It is your birthday on All Hallows' Eve," Jeanette said.

"Yes, indeed, so it is. And you will be here. We will have a dance. John, are you listening? We will have a dance on my birthday. We will have the big storeroom over the kitchen. That will be splendid. Oh, when is All Hallows' Eve? Next Tuesday week? Very well, then. We'll buck up and send out the notes to-morrow."

She looked at Jeanette, hesitating.

"You can—you will like it?" she asked.

"Yes, please. I am sure it will be ever so nice."

"Very well, then. And Sam Pascoe shall bring his violin. We will decorate the room with leaves and berries and Chinese lanterns, and in the kitchen all sorts of superstitious things shall take place—all sorts of games one should play on that night. And supper in here, and the drawing-room for sitting out. Oh, how absolutely ripping it will be!"

## CHAPTER XVII

IT was the last day of October—a white day with a pale sea under a pale sky and a faint white mist over the distances.

The leaves in the valley had entirely fallen, and the roads, the paths, were carpeted with them.

Thomasine and Jeanette came out from the garden and walked together along the road towards the beach, their arms about each other.

"It is so beautiful here!" Jeanette said. Thomasine nodded.

"Yes. One could enjoy it if one had money and the time. But I have no time and farming does not pay. It is folly to be a farmer these days. And John cannot get away very much—except to market. I *hate* markets—and the women. Oh, they have no mind above butter and eggs and babies. Babies! Such horrid, squally little kids; and such bothers as they are, too! . . . Oh, I can't go about very much. I don't like the people I see mostly, and the things I want to do I can't. I am awfully miserable sometimes."

"But you love the country——"

"Oh, Jeanette, *don't*! So many people throw that at me. I *don't* love the country; I love the world. I want to travel. I want to do all those dear, jolly things which other girls do. But I can't—how can I? I am married and done for."

Jeanette looked up. Thomasine scowled at the sea with heavy eyes ; she looked pale and tired ; she walked wearily with dragging steps.

" Oh, I know what you would say : Why did I marry him? I will tell you that, but it is in confidence. I married him to please Dad. . . . You know, he came to see me one afternoon at Pendennis, and we sat among the daffodils while he told me. He had known it before I came away from home ; but he had said nothing—he just endured. He told me beautiful thoughts of death and trouble, which took all the bitterness away, so that I could only think of being brave and of pleasing him. And he said it would please him if he could see me married to John. So I married John at Easter, and Dad gave me away. It was fine, I tell you. He was laughing and happy all the time. He told me such heaps of beautiful things. And then in May he died, quite quietly, without any fuss at all. I was with him at the time—I spent my honeymoon with him, and we buried him by his mother. I am sure he was happy ; I am sure he is happy now, but I do *wish* he could come back. Everything is so slow, so difficult. I vowed I would be brave when I saw him lying as if he slept. I *was* brave. But now—everything is so small. There are no great joys ; nothing to stir one, to make one laugh or to make one suffer. Ah, Jeanette, he said God honoured you because He gave you that illness. You know, when I heard of it I thought God was cruel. It seemed such a wanton wickedness to throw you out and very nearly kill you like that. But Dad showed me that I was wrong. He said

God had need of you. . . . And now you have come through your bad time, and everything is lovely. Your mother has only you, and you are such good friends with her. And you are quite well, and you will go about and see the world. Then, later on, you will marry Nicholas, and be happy ever after."

"Shall I be happy ever after?" Jeanette asked, her great sad eyes looking away from Thomasine at the soft green on the hills. "I don't think I shall," she said. "One could not be, I suppose. But I shall have Nick. Oh, Tamsie, you have no idea what he is to me!"

"What is he to you?"

"I don't know. I can't describe it. It is as though nothing can really be a bother now I have him. Nothing is too much to do for him, nothing wearisome. Even little things are pleasures."

"Oh, I wish I felt like that!" cried Thomasine. "But I do not."

"You love John?"

"Do I? . . . I wonder. . . . What do you mean by that word 'love'?"

Jeanette said nothing.

"Oh, let us talk of something else," said Thomasine impatiently. They turned the corner and came out on the beach. The sand was grey, the sea white, the tide far out. A gull wheeled and cried mournfully close to the shore; the sky was dazzlingly bright, as though the sun shone from behind a veil.

They crossed the sand to the edge where the sea rippled. Thomasine was very still. Far out, where the faint white mist hung low, veiling the

horizon, was a dark shadow and a cloud as of smoke. . . .

"Why do these things draw the heart out of me?" cried Thomasine. "I could walk bare-foot round the world. I could work as a man works for his daily bread. Oh, Jeanette, Jeanette, I ought never to have been a woman! I ought never to have married! . . . Oh, why may I not get away? Why should I have to care if the dinner is not cooked and the beds aren't made? Oh, Jeanette, what shall I do—I who am imprisoned, beaten down by so commonplace a life?"

She was crying again in that terrible, uncontrollable way. She turned from Jeanette. She fought for control. Jeanette went to her, put her arms about her, held her close, saying nothing. She stroked the bright head gently with her little hand.

"Oh, Tamsie, Tamsie!" she whispered at last, her own voice quivering.

Thomasine lifted her head. Jeanette's face, pale and sad, was close to her, her great eyes full of tears. Thomasine covered the face with hungry, passionate kisses.

It was sympathy which she asked, not love. Her childhood was over, her womanhood had not yet arrived. She craved for sympathy. Love is for women.

"Oh, you make me better," she said brokenly. "You do understand." She dropped her face against Jeanette's neck and kept it there in the warm curve. "I—I used not to cry," she said at last. "But I can't help it. And I am so often tired."

They stood together, looking out across the pale sea. Something swung up from the mist—something dark, bird-like, flying high above the sea.

"Look ! look !" cried Thomasine. "An aeroplane !"

It came nearer, flying high between the white sky and gleaming sea. It swooped above them, a swift, graceful object, dark against the light. It passed over the cliffs inland, out of sight.

Thomasine drew a long, quivering sigh.

"Let us go home," she said, and her eyes were hungry.

They went back silently, their arms about one another. Thomasine went up to her room.

Mrs. Barrow was in the dining-room, where the long table was already partly prepared for the evening's guests. Isobel Wane was there also, sitting by the fire with a book.

"Mother, I am worried about Tamsie," said Jeanette, sitting down on one of the chairs. "She is awfully miserable. She has been crying. And she is so tired. I wish the dance could be put off."

Mrs. Barrow glanced at Isobel, who nodded as though acquiescing to some remark. Mrs. Barrow put away her work in a little brocaded bag and stood up.

"I will go up and speak to her," she said.

"Girls of that age have no business to marry," said Isobel Wane, with some sharpness. "Especially these modern girls. It is a sin."

"Oh, Isobel——"

"Yes, it is. What do they know? They are not formed at all—they are just in the making. It was all very well in the old days when a girl

unmarried was an old maid at twenty-five. Thomasine won't be ripe for years."

"She married to please her father," said Jeanette.

"Then she had no right to. She never told her father the truth, I am sure. And besides, he had beautiful old-fashioned ideas. So now she will wreck John's life and her own, and others besides—just for a mistaken idea."

"She won't wreck any one's life!" said Jeanette indignantly. "And you ought not to speak so while you are here!"

"Oh, as to that—if I liked her less I should care less," Isobel answered, and took up her book.

Presently Jeanette went out of the room. The guests were to arrive at six and it was now almost five. There would be tea before they came. She went to her bedroom to remove her hat and coat.

She did not close her door, and the door of Thomasine's room opposite was slightly ajar. From the room there issued the sound of voices—Thomasine's petulant, a little unsteady; Mrs. Barrow's voice low, grave, and kind.

"So I should advise you not to dance too much," Jeanette heard her mother say. "You must take things quietly, you know. There, there, my dear, it is nothing to worry about. It is only what you must expect."

"But I don't want to expect it," said Thomasine.

Jeanette went swiftly to her door and closed it.

Presently she heard her mother come out and slowly descend the stairs, heard her enter the dining-room and close the door. Obeying a sudden

impulse, Jeanette ran after her, opened the door, and went in.

Isobel looked round at her with a start. Mrs. Barrow broke off in the middle of a sentence and shut her lips closely. Jeanette looked at them, waited a moment, then went out again and up to her room. When she had opened the door she had heard Mrs. Barrow say: "And she had not the slightest idea of it——" and then she had stopped.

Jeanette sat on the edge of her bed for a long time. There was no sound in the other room, where Thomasine was facing an overwhelming fact alone. Jeanette slipped down on her knees by the bed and hid her face.

## CHAPTER XVIII

THE lilt of a violin playing a two-step sang above the sound of flying feet. Chinese lanterns swayed amongst the trails of greenery ; through the wide-open windows was a vista of the black night, star-powdered, and the faint gleaming of the sea. The long room rocked with the dancers, gay voices sang to the mad tune of the violin.

Thomasine swayed down the floor amongst her guests, while Mrs. Barrow watched her with anxious eyes.

"She is quite mad !" said Isobel Wane, joining her. "Do you think she understands?"

"I told her," Mrs. Barrow answered. "I told her as plainly as language will permit. And, as I said to you, she was furious."

"I wish I had seen her."

"My dear, she went as white as a sheet, and her eyes blazed. I have never seen such a fire. 'How much more of it?' she said. 'Is there no limit to the fetters?' And then, just before I came away, she pulled herself up and thanked me for telling her. 'I am glad you told me,' she said. 'Is there nothing I can do?'"

"Yes ; you told me of it downstairs. Do not let us speak of it here. Oh, but you must talk to her. She will do something desperate if she is left to herself. She has no idea of the danger."

Mrs. Barrow lay back in her chair. The scene wearied her a little, and yet it was so fascinating to watch. They were all such young people; they were all enjoying themselves so immensely, with the high, good spirits of youth and health and keen interest.

"They are very good-looking, are they not?" she said. "Such fine types, many of them. And such boys, mostly, too! Where are the men?"

"Gone abroad," said Isobel. "It is a sign of the times, this dearth of manhood in the country and the little towns. These boys will go—most of them. And the girls will follow. It is a restless age. The cry is 'Move on!'"

"It is interesting to watch Peter," Mrs. Barrow said, and smiled. "Ah, there is Jeanette! Who is that young man talking to her?"

"I expect that is Mr. Tremain. You remember Tamsie said he would come—she sees him occasionally. He lives at Bonnoc House, you know. This is the home farm."

"Oh yes, I remember. So that is Mr. Tremain?"

Isobel nodded.

"Have you never wondered at Tamsie?" she said presently, in a low voice. "You have noticed what she is, as I have noticed. Yet there seems to have been no breath of a scandal of that sort—only talk in Saltram because she rides and walks so long after dark. And yet, of course, Mr. Tremain has only been home the last three weeks. She met him on the links."

"Why should there be any scandal?" Mrs. Barrow asked reproachfully. "Tamsie is well-

bred ; she has a line of clean generations behind her."

"Don't put it too plainly," Isobel murmured, "even if you are indignant. And don't mistake me : I am immensely fond of Tamsie. I want to give her a helping hand ; it seems to me the path of life is steep for her at present."

The violin shrieked and was silent, the shuffling feet were stayed, and the dancers broke up into laughing groups. The room was full of gay voices ; one of the lanterns flared a little ; men and girls drifted away down the stairs. Thomasine went across to Mrs. Barrow and Isobel.

"Let me introduce Mr. Tremain to you," she said. "Mrs. Barrow—Mrs. Wane." She sank down in a chair by Isobel's side.

"Tired?" Isobel asked.

"No, not in the least." Thomasine sat up sharply. "Mr. Tremain is going away again for a few moments," she said. "He is going to fetch his friend who came this afternoon in an aeroplane. Please be quick, or you will miss all the fun. We are going to do silly tricks in the kitchen."

"I'll run all the way," said Norman Tremain. "Please don't begin till I return." He vanished down the stairs which led directly to the kitchen.

"He is rather nice, don't you think?" said Thomasine. "Pity Uncle George and Aunt Bess have not come !" she added vaguely. She looked a little defiantly at Mrs. Barrow and Isobel. Her face was radiant with excitement, and the heavy shadows under her eyes seemed to add to, rather than detract from, her beauty. She was dressed in

grey, very pale and mist-like, without any touch of colour except an emerald pendant at her throat.

"Did John give you that pendant?" asked Isobel lazily.

"Yes—to-night. He says he has been saving up for ages to get it. It is rather nice, is it not? Where is he, by the way? Oh, there he is—coming up the stairs."

He crossed the room to them.

"Everything is ready in the kitchen," he said. "We will have one more dance, shall we?"

"Yes, by all means. Tell Sam a waltz this time. I believe I rather love waltzing. Dance with me, John?"

He called across the room to the fiddler and slipped his arm about his wife. She laughed up into his face, her eyes half closed, her white throat gleaming. He smiled, with his teeth gritted as though he held himself from her by force. Then, as the others came hurrying up the stairs, lured by the wistful call of the violin, he swung her down the long room.

"I shall tell him to-morrow!" Mrs. Barrow said, a little sharply.

"I am very much interested," said Isobel. "Do you think he has any control over her? And he doesn't care a bit about dancing either; in fact, he can't really dance at all. But he cares very much about swinging round the room with her."

"Oh, there is Mr. Tremain!" Thomasine cried as she passed the head of the stairs. "Stop, John! He has another guest with him. Yes, you have been very quick. We were having one more dance to fill in the time." She looked up at the

man whom Norman Tremain presented to her, and smiled radiantly.

Blaise Sanbourne bowed. Under their heavy lids his blue eyes looked very directly at Thomasine. She liked his thin, brown face, his close-cropped hair. He looked virile. Her colour mounted a little, as it often did when she met people for the first time.

"I saw you in your aeroplane," she said.

"It was good of you to send for me," he answered. "Tremain wouldn't bring me until you sent him back."

"Oh, you are very welcome!" she answered, looking from one to the other. She turned to John, who, having done his part, now stood aside. "If everything is ready, let us go downstairs," she said.

The kitchen was alight with the flames of the great log which burnt on the open hearth. The wide expanse of floor was empty and bare; the corners of the room were shadowy, full of mystery; the flames leaped and danced on the ceiling. Nowhere were there any lamps.

Every one came trooping down into the flickering light and grouped themselves about Thomasine and her bodyguard, waiting with excited expectation for the preliminaries to begin. She looked round on the circle of flushed, laughing faces, and she laughed also, softly, exultingly, so that Blaise Sanbourne went a step nearer, watching her. The cedar-log in the wide hearth cracked, a sweet perfume filled the kitchen.

"Now, all of you," Thomasine cried, "listen very attentively! We have all sorts of things to

do, but first you must choose partners. We will have the mirrors close to the hearth, John, but not in the heat. The ladies choose, but no one may choose her husband or brother. It is against the rules. Mrs. Barrow, will you go first?"

"I think I will be excused," Mrs. Barrow answered. "I would like to look on."

"Mrs. Wane, then. Come, Isobel."

Isobel Wane sat down on the three-legged stool in the firelight, and as the men filed behind her she wiped them out of the mirror one by one until she came to John.

"Now, Jeanette!" cried Thomasine. And Jeanette chose Peter.

Thomasine went through the list. Some one chose Norman Tremain, and he stood back in the shadow, his eyes following Thomasine as she moved amongst her flock of girls. He was rather good to look at, and, besides Sanbourne and John, he was the only man there in evening dress. Thomasine had insisted on it for John, but it had occurred to her several times that he looked his best in his riding clothes. But he could not wear them at a party, anyway.

Blaise Sanbourne turned to Thomasine as the last of the girls rose from the stool.

"It is you and I then, is it not?" he said.

She nodded.

"And I am hostess," she said; "so you will have to work."

"You may depend on me," he answered.

Then began games, competitions, and, as Thomasine had promised, "silly tricks." The great kitchen rang with laughter or was utterly

silent while the players hung, breathless with excitement, on the outcome of some turn in a game. Thomasine was everywhere, Blaise close at her side. The fun grew rollicking, the great log cracked and flamed on the hearth, and its perfume filled the room. The windows stood wide open to the cool night ; in the silences the clock ticked from the shadows above the mantel, and the sound of the sea came fitfully.

John sat by Isobel, and his eyes followed Thomasine. She was inexpressibly wonderful to him. The clock in one of the silences struck the hour. Thomasine looked up from her fortune-telling, which she was carrying out with the aid of a basin of water and the white of an egg. She was perfectly serious as she bent down in the fire-light reading the fortunes of the pair who knelt giggling behind her.

"And if you will walk together an hour before moonrise on the eighth day of the month you will find in a hole in the bridge by the shore a wedding-ring. It is a hole in the third row between the ninth and tenth stones from the west. And as you come back together you will meet an old man carrying a sack. And, passing him on his left hand, you will say, 'Why do you carry a sack, old man?' and then—and then—" Her hand shot out towards the fire and a blue flame, pale and quivering, sprang up from the log, swayed, and died. "Yes, the flame is blue, which means truth and constancy. . . . Which of you is it?" And she wheeled round on the pair who blushed and giggled behind her.

"Here, then," she said, and slipped something into their hands.

Then they went back to their seats and looked at what she had given them to bring them luck, and pinned the favour each to the other, while another pair went laughing to kneel on the cushion behind Thomasine.

She had something fresh, something unexpected for each. Jeanette knelt, trembling a little with excitement, Peter holding her hand. Thomasine breathed into the basin, paused impressively, and began—

"The Magic Bowl tells of a ship on the sea, a little girl with shy, dark eyes, a stile in the moonlight, and of a pale blue gown and silver shoes. One of you will cross the sea; one will stay behind. And there is no bond between you. But before you leave the palace of the magician stoop and kiss the threshold for luck. And let your right foot cross the threshold first. . . . Here are your mascots. Ah, Jeanette!"

And Peter decked Jeanette with a tiny silver shoe.

"Any more?" asked Thomasine at last.

"I don't think I will kneel," said Isobel.

"And you are my partner," said Sanbourne.

Thomasine looked at him and her eyes narrowed. He was leaning a little forward in his chair watching her, and the firelight, playing on his hair, made the red in it as a flame. His face was all high lights and deep shadows, like the face of a bronze.

"Kneel," she said, with a little gesture of her hand.

He knelt behind her, and she stared down into the bowl. There was a long silence, then—

"I will not tell you," she said.

There was a sensation at this.

"Please do," said Blaise. "Is it bad luck? I'd rather know."

Thomasine stood up abruptly so that she looked down on him as he knelt. Her face had lost all its radiance, her eyes were heavy with weariness.

"No," she said. "I will tell no more."

"Oh, what was it?" some one asked. "Is it really true, after all?"

Blaise rose to his feet.

"You alarm me," he said. Then he saw her weariness. "Ah! you are tired." He saw it at once. The clock struck eleven in the little silence, and Thomasine wheeled round.

"Supper!" she said. "Please keep your partners. Now, Sam!" And to the sound of the latest popular melody they danced out of the kitchen to the dining-room, where were lights and flowers.

It was late when the guests prepared to leave. The stable-yard was full of lanterns, bobbing and twinkling as the horses were brought out. Girls, cloaked and hooded, waited about the house and garden for a last whispered word with their cavaliers.

"Oh, you have all played so beautifully," Thomasine was saying in the hall. "I have enjoyed myself so much."

"And I also, Mrs. Latimer," said Norman Tremain. "Don't know when I have had such a rippin' time."

Blaise Sanbourne was behind him as he spoke, and Thomasine noted that Tremain was the taller

of the two. But Sanbourne was the flying type, tall enough, light of weight, keen-eyed.

"Good-night," he said. "May I come over with Tremain to call? I hope you are not over-tired."

Thomasine felt an unaccountable thrill.

"Please do come," she said. "Good-night."

She started suddenly and looked round.

"Oh!" she said. It was Peter kissing the doorstep for luck, while Jeanette waited to see it done. Thomasine looked back again at Blaise. He did not smile, and she withdrew her hand.

"Good-night," she said, and turned away.

## CHAPTER XIX

"DOES she play golf?" asked Blaise Sanbourne, lazily looking out over the lawn from the window. He was speaking of Thomasine.

"Yes, rather. There was a fuss about it at the time. You have no idea what snobs the people are in the country. Of course, she is just a farmer's wife, and her people have all been farmers except her father, and he was a doctor. But the secretary let her in before he knew himself. Mrs. Gray, wife of the Saltram doctor, made the most fuss, but Mrs. Latimer took no notice of it. She came up to play. And she knows what she is about, too. I have had a round or two with her."

There was a little silence. Tremain got up from the breakfast-table, crossed to the hearth, where a bright fire was burning, and lighted a cigarette.

"And there is a lot of rot about her amongst the people," he said. "Even the mater—well, you saw she objected to our going last night? One night she galloped through Saltram—it was about eleven o'clock, late for the country, and people talked. Oh, they are not in the same street with her. She is so amazingly young; she sees no harm in things."

"There is no harm in those things," said San-

bourne. "It is in the people's minds. 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder'; so is ugliness then, and all evil."

Norman laughed.

"She said something like that to me once. It was one morning at golf. She was bunkered, and she said 'Damn!' quite softly under her breath. I heard it. She is frightfully keen about things. . . . Well, she looked round at me. 'I only said a bad word if it seems a bad word to you,' she said. She doesn't think things out. That is why she is so interesting. Her ideas are unique."

Blaise whistled softly as he stood by the window. It was a damp, misty day, and the shrubs on the lawn dripped. He said nothing for a long time. He was thinking of the yellow light in the eyes of Thomasine, the brilliant, vivid beauty of her. . . . And she belonged to John Latimer—that silent, stolid, grave-faced farmer with the heavy line between his brows and the hard mouth. Strange things come to pass in this strange world.

Thomasine meanwhile had awakened to the day. She was very tired; the colour had gone from her face, the shadows under her eyes were heavy and dark. She rose, dressed slowly, and descended to a disordered house.

Polly was busy in the kitchen, the dining-room was still overcrowded with chairs, the cloth not yet removed from the table. Thomasine sighed and bit her lip. She had much to do. . . .

She had sent three breakfast-trays to her guests upstairs, had straightened the dining-room, and was sitting by a smoking fire with a cup of tea and some toast when John entered.

"Tired?" he said. "You are looking pale."

"Oh, I am all right," she answered listlessly. "Tell Polly to bring in your breakfast. Thank goodness she goes to-morrow."

He sat down at the table and poured out his tea while she crouched over the dull fire.

"You look fagged out," he said, watching her. She answered nothing.

He went on with his breakfast in silence, as usual not knowing what to do, but longing to help.

"It was all right last night, wasn't it?" she said presently.

"Yes, splendid. They did enjoy themselves."

"That Mr. Sanbourne was a great help. Mr. Tremain, too; but Mr. Sanbourne was better." Again her voice trailed away.

He got up presently and went over to her. He knelt, and poked the fire into a blaze.

"Tom!" he said, turning to her, still kneeling. He took her hands between his own. "Are you cold?" he said.

She raised her heavy eyes; they dwelt on him with a brooding sadness—pain, fear, resentment in their depths.

"What is it?" he whispered.

She broke into passionate, bitter sobbing: "Oh, John! Oh, John!" and clung to him like a frightened child.

## CHAPTER XX

THOMASINE stood by the widely opened window of her bedroom, looking out at the sweet May dusk from which arose to her the scent of the hawthorn hedges, of lilac in the garden, of laburnum.

Under the pale, fading beauty of the sky the sea lay and called, its shimmering, placid bosom white like a pearl. Only in the far distance was a line of faint rose and amethyst, where the light of the departed sun still lingered.

As she stood there listening she heard those numerous half-hushed sounds which rose up in the silence preceding the night and added harmoniously to the peace of that tender beauty: little sounds in the barns, sounds of hoofs in the stables, of moving feet and low voices, the rustling of a belated hen going back to her nest, the cooing of the doves returning on soft wings to the dove-cote above the roof. It seemed to Thomasine that every little sound had its own place in that symphony of evening, and that in the deep silence every murmur and rustle was distinguishable.

A cockchafer boomed above the great white lilac-bush by the gate below her; somewhere under the eaves close to her head a bird twittered, broke off drowsily, twittered again, and was still. Something of all this peace and beauty, this quiet

preparing for night and rest, soothed her as she stood there leaning out. Soon, in a few days, her child would be born. Out of the infinite would come another living soul to be loved and cared for and equipped for the battle of life.

All the long, slow months had passed and were lost as a dream is lost at the coming of day. All the pain and weariness, the fret and restraint, were almost at an end. There was to be one great fight, one terrible agony, and then—and then—it would be over, the child would be here, and John would see his desire fulfilled.

Thomasine drank deep of the sweet air ; she sighed and smiled. She stretched out her hands to the whispering, gleaming dusk.

" And then I will come back to you," she said—" to the night rides, to the bathes in the sea at dawn." She drooped her head. " And it will be summer," she whispered, and laughed in her throat softly. " The winter is gone."

It had been a hard winter of sleet and hail, of rain and thick, white fog ; then bitter days in early spring, then weeks of slow rain. But it was all over. The summer was coming, with the long days and the flowers. And she would be free again, young, active, unburdened. . . . So it came to pass that she lay as the dawn broke a few days later, white and spent, the sweat of her agony on her brow, her voice a whisper, her eyes deeply shadowed, but exultant, glad.

John went to see her as the sun rose and the land grew warm. The singing of the birds had mingled with his son's first cry. His son ! He went to Thomasine, and knelt by her.

He had no words ; he kissed the long strands of bright hair ; he held her hands close and warm in his own.

She turned her head and smiled at him.

"It is over," she said. "And you are glad? Now I shall get well."

He kissed her brow. Expression was not easy for him. He took the child to her and would have laid him in her arms. She touched the small, puckered face with curious fingers, and dropped her hand.

"Take him away," she said. "I am very tired." She turned her head aside and would not see. She had paid too heavy a price for this small life. She grudged the price, for she had had to pay against her will, whether she would or no. This was the inexorable law.

But now that she had given life to this stranger whom she had not desired, now that she had gone through the Valley of the Shadow to the gates of Life and Death, and had returned therefrom with the child, as John had hoped she would do, surely her part was done. For John had wished this of her ; he was glad, setting her pain and weariness as a light thing to be paid in return for this small, helpless body, this babe who was his son. He had had to pay no part of that price ; he had suffered nothing. Yet the child was his, and he could care for it henceforth.

Meanwhile the glad days of freedom and unrestraint would come back to her. So Thomasine lay and smiled, watching her mother amuse herself with this child, her grandson. Helen was happy those days in May and June. Her own nest was

empty ; she gathered the tiny body close to her thin breast and hushed it, covering its face with hungry kisses.

Such an attitude of mind amazed Thomasine. The child cried ; his screaming kept her awake, it made her head ache. He wanted almost constant attention, infinite watchfulness. And yet . . . when she held him in her arms and felt his lips at her breast something of wonder came into her eyes. He depended on her for his life as John depended on her for his happiness. Surely it was very wonderful to be a woman who gave life and brought happiness.

But the scent of the roses at the window came to her overpoweringly sweet ; the birds called, the sea crooned ; sun and showers came and went as the days passed and the height of summer approached. Thomasine lay awake at night and thought of Gay Boy and the pad-pad of hoofs on the sand when the tide was out, of the cold water rippling in the glow of the sunrise, and her white body floating in the glory of the coming light.

She thought of the pine-woods on the crest of the western hill above the valley, of the odour of the pine-needles on the ground as one looked out through the red-brown boles at the gates of the sunset opening to show the pageant of colour before Night came, grey-black, to close them again and seal them with a star.

And there would be storms—wind and rain. The sea would rise and foam, dashing its waves against the little stone pier, against the rocks and grey beach ; the trees would toss, the flowers would be beaten down and scattered ; the rain

would sweep through the valley like an army of spears.

All the world was full of such glory, calling one to come, daring one to mad adventure, leading one from shore to valley, from sea to sea. And there were so many things to do—to ride and swim and dig, to fly between the earth and the sky, to race with the winds, to dance amongst the flowers.

Life, as it came back to her, brought her renewed vigour, a greater hunger for wandering and accomplishment. She could never settle down in the chimney-corner or the garden seat with her child.

"I must get away," she said, clenching her hands, her face to the window. "I must get away." And the yellow light in her eyes burnt as a flame.

## CHAPTER XXI

"ARE you going out, Tamsie?"

It was Helen who asked, looking up in surprise at Thomasine, who had come with swift, light feet down the stairs.

Helen was sitting in the cool of the evening in the old stone porch before the open front door, her small hands in her lap, her face very pale and delicate above her black gown of widowhood.

Thomasine paused, irresolute.

"Yes," she said. "I am going to ride."

"But it is late. It will soon be dark. Is John going?"

"Oh, he is busy somewhere. I often go out in the evening and stay out till after dark. Sometimes in the summer I go at dawn."

"Does John allow it?"

"He can't say anything. Of course, he fusses about it, but I go. Why should I not? Sometimes he comes, too, but I'd as soon be alone. . . . Oh, Mother, where is the harm? Nothing will hurt me or molest me. I am immensely strong."

"I never heard of such an idea in my life before," Helen said with asperity. "What sort of name do you suppose you will have?"

"I am sure I don't know. What difference

can that make to me? Oh, it is so absurd! A woman may ride all day, but she may not ride at night. Why not? Why should she not? Because it is unconventional? What difference does that make?"

"All the difference," Helen answered.

"Besides," Thomasine continued, "I am not out late. One must sleep sometime, and I can't sleep in the day. It is only the country people who say it is late. Ten o'clock, perhaps."

"You said at dawn."

"Oh, sometimes I rise very early and go out. It is wonderful in the morning. Why should I be afraid? Besides, I have the horse, or the dogs, or both."

"And baby? You cannot stay away from him."

"He is all right while you are here. And he won't want me for nearly two hours. I shall be back again then. Let me pass, Mother."

"Oh, Tamsie, don't go. Don't be silly. All sorts of things may happen or be said. You will have no reputation at all."

At that Thomasine stopped and faced Helen with a kind of deliberate anger, as though she held herself in leash.

"That sort of thing has been said before," she said, "but I did not think it would occur to you. You know I am incapable of doing anything wrong—dishonourable—like that. You ought to know it. I ride, I walk, I swim at any hour that pleases me, and I do in your absence as I do in your presence. You know that—you do know that. My reputation will come to harm, perhaps, but only through evil minds and malicious

tongues, not through any deed of mine. And so I don't worry about my reputation."

She turned on her heel and went out into the warm evening. Gay Boy was in the meadow; he came to her when she called, and she led him to the stable and saddled him.

"If John took away the saddle I should ride bareback," she said, as she mounted. "And if he took away Gay Boy I should ride Yvette. But he won't do anything like that—he would not think of it. He is not in the least revengeful or petty—that is something to be thankful for."

She rode fast towards the beach, where the waves glimmered white in the dusk and the gulls called as they returned to the cliffs. There was a little wind here by the sea, and the beating of the waves against the shore. The fishing fleet lay far out; little yellow lights twinkled across the water. The gleam of the Eddystone lamp shone, starlike, low on the horizon, disappeared, and again shone out.

"If I had been a man!" said Thomasine. "What a life I would have had! Not luxury, not idleness, but work and wandering. And no one would have held me back, no one would have talked of danger, of lost reputations, or any other stupidity like that. Oh! women are tied—married women with children. If John was not a farmer—if he would wander too, if he could get away! But he can't—he can't—he won't. But I will!"

Far across the sea as she looked out with the wander-lust in her eyes and the hungry, restless longing growing fierce within her, something small and dark hung against the fading glory of the

sky. It came nearer, it grew large, a beautiful flying thing, bird-like, with wide pinions outspread. It tilted a little as though in a current of wind, and passed low over her head with a soft purring noise, and, as Gay Boy reared and plunged, it rose gracefully and flew inland over the cliffs.

"The aeroplane!"

So Blaise Sanbourne had returned to Bonnoc House, and she would see him again.

She held Gay Boy with a light hand and struck him once with her switch. He swerved sharply, and was off, galloping furiously, along the shore towards Saltram. Thomasine rode hard and far. Something within her was awake and thrilling, something which took away all feeling of impatience, of restlessness or discontent. She had not seen him—Blaise Sanbourne—again since that night of All Hallows' Eve, but dimly she had been aware of a thought of him in her mind since then. She could see his face at times so distinctly, that it seemed that he was present indeed, in the room with her, looking at her with his eyes—blue eyes and extraordinarily vivid.

And behold! he had come back, flying through the dusk over land and sea, his engine purring, his machine tilting a little and sweeping inland on wide, white wings, bringing with him a new interest, a new pleasure to drug her restlessness.

She rode back through the quiet night, Gay Boy's hoofs going softly in the white dust. Now she would return to her child, hold him a while in her arms, then sleep till the day broke.

The early morning saw her up and about, in the dairy, in the kitchen, in the yard. As she

worked she sang, not with the soft croon of the mother-woman busy with the tasks of her household, but with the lilting voice of a girl who is radiant and excited because of a secret joy.

John in the stable-yard heard her, and the gravity of his face broke up. He called cheerily to the horses as they passed out with the harness jingling loosely on their backs. He whistled as he went after them to the day's work, for the girl he loved had returned and was happy.

Helen heard also as she bathed and dressed the child, and went down with him in her arms to the dining-room, where the breakfast was laid and ready. She looked up as Thomasine came in, carrying a steaming dish surrounded by appetising odours, breaking off in the middle of her lilting chorus to speak.

"Oh, there you are! Yes, breakfast is ready. Why is Dick crying? Does he want his breakfast too? Give him to me, then; I quite forgot." She took the child, cradling his small head in the crook of her arm, and something of the radiance died out of her face.

"How long before he will be able to do without me?" she asked.

"He will never be able to do without you," Helen answered.

"He will have to. I have no time to coddle him. Do you think he will have the yellow in his eyes? Sometimes I think not. Perhaps they will be dark and brown, like Father's."

She was silent a moment.

"I wish he could see him," Mrs. Latimer said softly.

Thomasine was silent.

"I hope his eyes are like Dad's," she said at last, "and that he will be like him. The Latimers are mostly hard, and fierce, and unhappy. Dad was the happiest man I ever saw."

John entered the room and stopped by the door, watching his wife and his son. He went across to her and tilted up her face roughly with his hand and kissed her lips. His eyes were like hot coals; he felt his happiness, the happiness he had hoped for, was come to him.

"I have made bread this morning," said Thomasine, "and I mean to do a great deal of cooking. I shall be very busy because I want everything done before dinner-time. That is why I got up so early."

"What are you doing this afternoon?" asked Helen.

"Oh, I shall be about. We will see. And John is going to market. I am not—I hate markets. So he will be away all day."

It was exceedingly warm in the kitchen, and Thomasine had a great deal of cooking to do. Little Dick was fretful, and cried—not loudly, but with a low wail which was infinitely trying. It came in the pauses when Thomasine sang, and once when she was silent it rose to a shrill scream.

"Mother, he does cry so!" she said at last, crossly.

Mrs. Latimer was in the garden in the shade by the kitchen window, with little Dick in his perambulator close to her.

"Yes, he is not very well. It is the heat, and he seems to have a little rash which irritates him. But it is nothing to worry about."

"I am not worrying. I am only annoyed. He will have to learn not to yell like that when he is uncomfortable. It puts every one out."

The scent of the hot pies and cakes was wafted through the open window into the sunny garden, where the bees were toiling and the birds were busy. Thomasine loved the sun and the warmth, but she loved the wind and the rain better. It was not luxury and peace which appealed to her, but life, force, movement. And the night, which is full of mystery, was better than the day.

And yet—to fly high above a sparkling sea under a dazzling turquoise sky, to swoop with the gulls over the golden cliffs, to pass over the pines on the hill, to see the little town spread out at the mouth of the coombe where the river ran into the sea—ah! the day was perfect for such a delight as that.

She went upstairs after the early dinner to her room. The white blinds had been lowered over the open windows; the big bed, with its gleaming brass, its rose-coloured counterpane, offered a promise of rest through the hot hours. . . . It was early yet to fly between the sky and the land and sea.

She threw herself down on the bed, her hair loosened, her morning dress removed. The sunbeams which reached her by the side of the blind lay like golden bars across her hair and the whiteness of her skin. She reached up lazily with a long, luxurious stretching of all her muscles to the bookshelf by her bed. Her hand touched a little grey volume, and she took it down.

There were many kinds of books on this shelf by her bed: poetry, travel, some novels—the latter not the sort most girls would choose. For they

dealt, not with love but with the hard work of men on land and sea. Some of them told of the doings of one Captain Kettle and a Scotsman named MacTodd. "Kim" was there also, and the "Beloved Vagabond," and others of that ilk. "The Roadmender" also found a place—food for another side of the girl's character—an unexpected side, perhaps, but not to be denied; "The Seven Seas" and "The Five Nations," "Pippa Passes," and "The Path to Rome," and many others, both classic and modern.

Thomasine turned on the bed and opened the little grey book. The words sprang at her as they always did when they appealed at all, and as she read she heard the beat of drums, the march of many feet, and saw the waving of banners. For the world lay spread out before the eye of her imagination as she read verse after verse of the "Ave Imperatrix"—not a world *given*, but fought for inch by inch, suffered for, died for, paid for.

Men did these things—not women. For women had to sit at home to weep or applaud. There was no honour in that, she said, no test of courage. It was the men who went with marching feet across the Empire, across the world, and saw, and accomplished, and suffered. Women could not do these things; and she was a woman. No matter how she might strive she could not rid herself of the burden of her sex. It was unjust, it was intolerable. Even the women at Dyleshart, governing, working, learning, building up a nation for themselves, had the opportunity given them by men. "You may have so much land and a certain grant of money, and you may do as you like pro-

vided you keep the peace within and without your borders." Thus the British Government had said—giving a new toy to the importunate woman—an intellectual toy indeed, but a toy for all that.

And if they broke the peace?

Thomasine sighed. Her eyes turned again to the book and the printed verse within its shabby grey covers. The pain of those last verses! The record of lonely death, of deathless courage, of heroism! . . . Yet even all that suffering was preferable to sitting at home as women should, looking on, and listening to the throbbing of the distant drums.

"I could do so much," said Thomasine, clenching her hands. Her face was the face of a boy who reads of glory, of war, of fame.

"If I could get away! Not those things—no women can, but other things. I could touch the fringe, as it were, of the banners. If I had not John, and little Dick, and all they require of me.

"Men," she muttered half-dreamily, "they win the land, fight for it in blood and suffering; they build homes on it, and they light a fire on the hearth, and by the hearth they place their woman. And they work for her. They call her queen, but they do not obey. Queen Dolt! Their toy, their plaything. And perhaps they grow tired and go away, and the hearth-fire dies and the woman grows old. Or perhaps they turn her out into the dark and cold and bring another woman and build the fire higher for her. It is as they wish—always."

She got up, and the book fell to the ground. She sighed, and the tears stood in her eyes. She took up her brush and passed it over her hair,

throwing the bright strands about. They caught the sunbeams and imprisoned them. She looked like a pale saint with an aureole of gold. It was the heat which made her so pale, which gave her eyes such heavy shadows. Ah, but how beautiful she was! Again, as before, she confessed it to herself, just as she confessed that the flowers and the sky were beautiful. And no one ever saw her beauty except John. Everything was for John, it seemed, and he had not the power to appreciate. She stood with the brush poised, and thought of Blaise.

Why, of course, he was here—at Bonnoc. She had seen him come in the aeroplane. And she would fly with him yet—fly over the sea and the land in the sunlight, not once, but many times. The colour rose in her face and glowed there. Her eyes shone. Why, she had had it in her mind all the morning—in the night, too, while she slept.

She dressed with quick fingers, awake to every effect which would enhance her beauty. She bound her hair close to her head in bright bands which rippled and broke youthfully into curls. She put on a fresh white dress, which left her throat and fore-arms bare. Then, light-footed, she ran downstairs.

She heard her mother's voice in the dining-room speaking to some one. Thomasine listened, her heart throbbing, her colour bright. The voice was low; then Helen laughed.

Thomasine went to the door and opened it. The room was all in shadow, for the blinds were partly drawn; her mother was sitting in one of the big chairs with little Dick in her arms, and opposite her was placid Aunt Bess.

## CHAPTER XXII

THOMASINE was sensible of acute disappointment. Her face fell. But she went forward and kissed Aunt Bess, who thought she looked pale, and not quite well.

"I am perfectly well," said Thomasine, sitting down. She spoke shortly. Another of her beautiful plans had failed.

"Uncle George and I came over," said Aunt Bess, throwing back her bonnet-strings, and wiping her comely face with her handkerchief. "It is quite a time since I saw you, but you are busy now with baby to look after, and all. You will be glad to keep your mother awhile."

"As long as she will stay," said Thomasine. "A long time, I hope," she added meditatively.

"He is a fine boy," said Aunt Bess. She held out her arms for the child. "Eh, a fine bonny boy, and full four months old now, too."

Little Dick awoke and wailed.

"He isn't very well," Helen said. "It is so hot for him. It is time Tamsie took him again."

Thomasine took the child with a resigned expression, and sat in silence while the older women talked. Then she gave him again into the ready arms of Aunt Bess, and went out of the room with a murmur about tea. She came back as Uncle

George entered, and his eyes, meeting hers, were very searching, and not a little hard. Thomasine burned with resentment under their gaze. What had she done to warrant such a look as that?

"Up to your tricks again, I hear," he said as she gave him his first cup of tea.

"Tricks?" she repeated. "What tricks?"

"Riding late," he answered, with suppressed anger. "Clattering through Saltram when decent people are abed. Fine tales they are telling."

"Let them tell," she replied. "You had better tell John," she added. "If he is a man, he will see that some people mind their own business."

"I'll not tell John," he said, and a moment later John came in.

Thomasine turned to him quickly.

"What time did I come in last night?" she said.

John greeted his mother and sat down.

"About ten," he answered, filling his plate.

Thomasine turned to her uncle.

"There you are!" she said triumphantly.

"You can believe what you like."

"If I had the shaping of you——" he began.

"Now, George, George!" said placid Aunt Bess. She passed her cup to Thomasine. "Some more cream in my tea, love," she said.

Thomasine seethed with anger. To be spoken to thus before her mother and John! She choked down her fury. She would tell him later—this hard, angry man who scolded her while he partook of her hospitality.

John, turning to his father, began to talk of matters pertaining to the farm; there was a doggedly persistent note in his voice as though

he would have no other subject discussed but that, as though he would keep the conversation to himself, and thus draw attention from Thomasine.

Thomasine instantly resented it. It seemed to her that she was being treated as a child from whose bad behaviour all notice must be firmly distracted. She felt humiliated, and (this quite honestly) she could not understand why she was considered badly behaved. Her house was in order, her husband had all the attention necessary to his well-being, she had brought into the world a son, as he had desired. But because she had outside pleasures in which John refused to join she was looked upon as a refractory person needing punishment.

And what, after all, were her pleasures? They were quite innocent. If Saltram must talk of her because she rode alone and late—late, that is, according to Saltram's standard of hours—because she rose early to bathe, because the fishermen had seen her on the rocks and the shore in the early mornings, because she golfed occasionally with people whom John barely knew and who resented her admission to their club, because she held no intercourse with those of her neighbours who were her "equals," because she had youth and beauty, was full of life and fire—why, then, nothing could alter matters. Saltram would continue to talk of her, to look after her with sidelong glances as she passed through the narrow streets.

Thomasine, sitting in lonely state at the head of her table, listening to John's voice talking to his father, to Helen's voice mingling with the soft, comfortable tones of Aunt Bess, burned with re-

sentment. She was being ignored. She knew they were trying to be tactful, to subdue the ire of Uncle George. But how petty he was—this uncle of hers, whom she had thought so big and fine—if he listened to the small talk of Saltram !

Thomasine gulped down her tea and sat with her eyes on her uncle's face, and George Latimer was very conscious of their steady regard. Twice he turned to her as though to speak, and each time John broke in with a question. Then Aunt Bess, seeing her empty plate, inquired what she would have.

"Nothing, thank you," Thomasine answered stiffly, and as she spoke, hearing her own voice sound like that of a stranger, she drew herself up, and her eyes on George Latimer's were full of pride.

He looked at her as they rose from the table, and she laughed, her voice ringing on a high note, her face brilliant, her eyes on fire. It was a laugh of contempt and of great insolence. It angered him. His face was burnt a deep red ; he caught her by the shoulder with a heavy hand.

There was nothing of the weak woman about Thomasine. Her strength was one of the proudest joys of her life. From the evening when, awakened suddenly to the narrow path which promised to open before her, she had met and easily defeated the man who barred her way at the entrance of her home, she had known that no man could lay an undesired touch on her and she must suffer it. Rough handling of any sort was the one thing which never failed to raise her to a height of fury.

She swung round from the grip on her shoulder

with an insolent ease and stood back a step facing her uncle, her face quite white.

"Keep your hands off me!" she said. Words did not come easily to George Latimer, but his eyes gleamed as he stared at her. Yet, for all his anger, he could not but admire the slim, straight figure before him, with its tense, alert poise, its white, proud face and great flaming eyes.

"You vixen!" he said.

Thomasine turned contemptuously on her heel and left the room, as though he were neither to be thought of nor feared.

"Oh, George!" Aunt Bess exclaimed, "you are only making matters a great deal worse. Why can't you let her be?"

"Let her be?" he shouted, his pent-up fury escaping him in a great burst of rage. "Let her be, when every man in the county knows of her and her doings! Clattering through Saltram after midnight, down on the rocks even before the labourers are astir. Robey himself told in the 'Silver Queen' that he saw her floating on the water in the bay when he was coming back from his fishing—swam out to the smack and fooled round it. And he heard her singing on one side or the other all the way to the harbour bar. And Robey tells it of her in the 'Silver Queen,' a common public-house! I tell you she is a bold woman, and will be a bad one. Why don't you stop it?" He turned furiously on John. "It is your place to make her obey. If she were my wife, I would beat it out of her!"

"I don't see any harm in it," John said, and his voice was hard. "She is my wife. She shall

do as she likes. It is in Saltram and men like Robey that the evil lies. Why should she not bathe at any hour she likes? And she never rides at midnight. That is a lie. And as for what is said in the 'Silver Queen,' it is beneath contempt. Thomasine and I can afford to ignore it. I will knock down the next man who repeats to me what is being said, and that is the end of it."

John Latimer turned on his heel as Thomasine had done and went from the room, leaving his father to shout at the top of his great voice.

"Go and put on your things, Bess!" he stormed. "We don't darken this house again while that woman is in it."

Aunt Bess rose, red and flurried. In silence she tied her bonnet-strings, and Helen fetched her cloak. Helen was on the verge of tears.

"Don't worry, my dear," Aunt Bess said in an undertone. "Things will come right."

But when they had driven away, the horse bounding under the cuts of the whip, Helen sat down and wept. Yet she knew that Thomasine was neither a bold woman nor a bad one, but only very young and full of life. And she knew also that in Saltram were edged tongues, malicious and jealous minds, and evil thoughts for what was young and beautiful and not easy to understand.

She began to wonder presently where Thomasine had gone and whether John had followed her and found her. As a matter of fact, John had not found Thomasine, neither had he sought her, for he was sore at heart and more than a little angry. He knew that there was some foundation for the stories which were current in Saltram. Thomasine

was utterly uncontrollable, and a woman should always be under control, otherwise she made a fool of herself.

John thought of the kind of talk which, according to his father, was going on in the "Silver Queen." There was nothing to be done about it; it could only be utterly ignored. For, once before, when he himself had told Thomasine of talk in Saltram, she had said proudly: "They cannot insult me unless I will be insulted. They cannot touch me at all." And he felt this was so, that such things were beneath her notice, her contempt.

He saw his father and mother drive away. He saw the horse plunge under the cruel cuts of the whip. They did not see him where he stood watching them go. His mother was an obedient woman and under her husband's control; his word was law to her.

He went out slowly to the field where the men were carrying corn. The field lay above the cliffs, which stretched down beyond the fence to the silver sand and the calm sea. He removed his coat and went to work in dogged, almost sullen, silence. He felt that these men, his labourers, spoke of her, of Thomasine; made of her pleasure, her gaiety, her recklessness, her vivid beauty a byword and a scandalous tale. The thought angered him anew; it burned into his brain, scarring him. Yet he could do nothing. . . .

Far out across the sea as the evening drew on an aeroplane swooped with wide white wings. It flew towards the heart of the sun. He watched it as he worked. . . .

## CHAPTER XXIII

THOMASINE left the dining-room with fury in her heart. The hall was deep in shadow, the door wide open, the sunlight outside dazzlingly bright. She went out. She heeded nothing of the way she went ; she wanted only to get away, to move, to do something, for the storm within her raged, demanding an outlet. She went out into the sunshine, passed through the garden into the road, and then, hatless, in her white frock, towards the cliffs.

She dropped on the grass and lay there, looking across the sea. She hated Uncle George ! Never would she speak to him again. He had no right to touch her at all, to criticize her conduct ; he had no authority over her. Why, in the name of Heaven, might she not bathe and ride when she liked ? . . . Ah ! but those rides in the dark were glorious, especially if it rained. And to bathe in the early morning when the water was so cold and the boats were coming back from the fishing ; to sing as they came, as the mermaids sing to the sailors, to race the boats with their great brown sails, to dive under the shadowy hulls . . . oh, those were good things to do ! One went back to the commonplace world fresh and alive. One had played awhile in a fairy realm, in the glamour

cast over land and sea by dawn and one's imagination.

"I shall do as I like!" said Thomasine. Her hands tore at the heather. "I shall do as I like!" she said. "There will be a moon to-night. Oh, I will bathe in the moonlight. I will swim in the silver path. I have never done that before."

Pleased with this new idea, her anger died. She was absorbed with her thoughts.

"I will bring little Dick when he is big enough," she said to herself. "Oh, he does not want me much now, and mother can look after him. Soon he will be no bother at all, and then he will be delightful. We will go off together, he and I, and have some awfully good times. Babies are all right to play with."

She started as a shadow crossed her. She turned quickly and looked up. She saw the face of Blaise Sanbourne smiling down at her.

"I thought when I first caught sight of you that it was Mrs. Latimer," he said.

Thomasine stood up, and her colour rose. She was confused. She shook hands with him in silence, her eyes on his face.

"Did I startle you?" he said.

She recovered herself.

"Yes, you did a little," she answered. She laughed suddenly. "I saw you come in your aeroplane," she said.

"Did you? Yes, I have come to Bonnoc House again. First time since last October. I've not seen you since the party."

Thomasine laughed. The sun was full upon her, on her hair, her eyes, her lips. She stood

on the green and gold of the clifftop between the sky and sea, and she was more beautiful than she had ever been, and the river of life ran hot and strong through her veins.

"Where is your aeroplane?" she said. "I have never seen one except in flight."

"Have you not, really? It is farther on round the cliff. Tremain had a place fenced in for it. Do come and see it."

She turned at once to go with him. They were both hatless, and the sun made his red hair and close-cropped moustache even redder than she had thought, and his eyes were extraordinarily blue.

"Do you remember your party last year?" he said. "And how you told fortunes in the fire-light—every one's except mine. I have been curious ever since. What did you see for me? I think I ought to know."

"I forget," she replied.

He looked at her. "I wonder if you do," he said. "I remember every detail."

Again her colour rose under the glance of his eyes. Something thrilled within her; she felt herself on the edge of a new and wonderful game—a game full of interest and danger which set her pulses racing with excitement.

"Yes, I do forget," she said. "Or, no, let me think. There was nothing in the glass for you."

"Nothing at all? Not even bad luck?"

"No, nothing. I could make nothing of your fortune."

"I think you ought to try again," he said, after a moment.

"Oh, the opportunity is gone."

"But perhaps it will come again. Let us hope so, for I want to know. Ah! there is the plane."

They had come in sight of the white-winged aeroplane, half outside the shed which had been put up as a hangar. Thomasine had noted the shed before, and she had wondered.

"Tremain is getting a plane, too," said Blaise. "He is very keen. We go this way; there is a gate in the fence."

He led her through into the wide enclosure where the plane waited at the entrance to the hangar. No one else was there, for Blaise had been alone when he had come away for a stroll, and so had found Thomasine.

He began to explain to her all the details and devices of the beautiful thing; he was full of pride in it, pointing out every perfection, pleased at her outspoken, enthusiastic delight.

"Women can pilot planes?" she asked.

"Oh yes, lots of them do. But it is risky enough for men, without endangering the women's lives. But they will do it."

"Women are not afraid," said Thomasine. "And nowadays they like to do things. I wish I had the chance of learning to pilot an aeroplane."

"Have you not any chance?" he asked.

"No. I am married. I've a house to look after, and little Dick. Oh, I have to push a perambulator when I might be flying an aeroplane. I do hate it so!"

Blaise Sanbourne did not laugh. He, in a way, understood Thomasine. He had heard much of her, of her escapades. He knew there was no cure for her; she could only grow old.

"Would you care——" he began. "Do you think you might have a trip with me? We could go out now—it is a perfect evening—and just fly round the bay. Will you?"

Thomasine glowed; her eyes shone.

"I should love it," she said. "I would rather do it than anything."

"Very well, then. She is in perfect order, and will be quite ready in five minutes." He glanced at her dress. "You have no coat," he said. "There is a wind when you are up."

"Oh, I shall not take cold. I can't go back for one."

He went into the hangar and came out with a coat of his own.

"Put this on," he said. "It will be better than nothing."

Thomasine laughed and slipped her arms into the coat.

"Do be quick!" she cried. "Something will happen to stop us. Some one will come very likely."

Blaise was inside the hangar.

"Who will come?" he asked.

"Oh, any one."

"What does it matter?"

"It does not matter to me, but people are always angry when I do anything."

She was, as he had thought, just an eager child.

"Do you worry?" he said.

"No, not a bit; only it is a bother. Oh, are you ready?"

"Yes, quite. Help take her out. Yes, push there. That's splendid! Now go in there and

sit down. I am going to tie your skirt, because the wind will blow you about. What about your hair? "

" Oh, never mind it. Let it blow down or blow off—it does not matter a bit. Show me where I can hold on."

Blaise tied her skirt securely, and got into his own seat.

" Sure you are all right? " he said.

" Yes, yes ! Now start."

The plane ran lightly to the cliff's edge and soared up like a bird. Thomasine looked out at the sun. The sea stretched before her, shining ; the little white town passed under her eyes ; the pines on the hill were a shadow.

They turned and flew higher, straight towards the sun. The wind of their movement plucked at the girl's loose coat, ruffled and loosened her hair, cooled her face. The engine throbbed like a heart beating with glorious life ; they swept up into the blue, high above the shining sea.

Cliff and hill, wood and water, passed below them as they rose in a great circle. Thomasine looked down at a wonderful world, and she was mute with ecstasy. A long strand of hair streamed behind her ; as they turned it whipped her face, and presently crossed her eyes, shutting out the light of the sun. She tossed her head to throw it back, and the throb of the engine ceased. They swooped downwards ; the sea seemed to rush up to meet them, the golden cliffs came near, they landed, without a jar, on the short grass of the enclosure.

Blaise turned his head.

"Bravo!" he cried. He saw Thomasine's face and its expression. "Oh, you liked it," he said. "You look as if joy had kissed you in the face." Thomasine sighed.

"Oh, it was wonderful!" she said. "I would fly for ever. Don't stop—take me up again!"

"I will take you to-morrow," he answered. "There is something in the engine needing attention." He released her and helped her down. "You will come to-morrow?"

"I will come every day. And you will show me how it is done? I want to do it—to fly myself. I want to learn all about it. It is splendid! It is divine!"

She slipped out of his coat and coiled up her hair. She was utterly without self-consciousness, as natural as a child.

"Let me see you attend to the engine," she said.

"My mechanic will do that," he answered. "We will just run her in and leave her."

The sinking sun had touched the edge of the sea before Thomasine would leave the hangar and allow Blaise to shut the door. She waited while he locked it. She was strangely quiet, and her eyes, as they looked out across the sea, were full of a hungry longing. He could not but notice it.

"The women of Dyleshart," she said—"they do these things?"

"Oh yes; anything they like. Motor-bikes to aeroplanes—it is all one to them. They *will* do it, you know."

Thomasine nodded.

"And I will also," she remarked.

They went out through the gate together. The sun had set, and all the western sky was banded with gold.

"I will walk back with you," said Blaise.

"Why? Don't bother—I am used to being out alone."

"You ought not to be. Besides, I want to come."

"Very well, come, then. And to-morrow—what time will the engine be ready?"

"When you like."

"Oh, I don't know when I can come," Thomasine replied restlessly. "There are so many things to do. I wish I could just come when I like, but one cannot let one's house get upside down. It is so horrid and uncomfortable when one does! I could come in the morning, about five o'clock, or in the afternoon, about three."

"The afternoon, I think," said Blaise. "The engine will hardly be ready so early in the morning."

"Very well; I shall exist till then. Oh, it was wonderful! I cannot tell you what it was like to me. One looked down on the world, and it was so beautiful! The sons of the gods fell in love with the daughters of men, and I am sure I don't wonder; for if they could look down on the world as I did, they would never rest till they had visited it."

"And having visited it and seen the daughters of men," said Blaise, "they straightway fell in love with them. I wonder how they came to the world?"

"They had winged sandals," said Thomasine.

"Otherwise they would have invented an aeroplane."

They went out on the road. By the gate where Thomasine had loitered that other day when coming back with John, two men were standing, looking out across the field to the sea. They turned as Thomasine came up the hill with Blaise. One of John's labourers touched his cap to Thomasine, who nodded carelessly. She stopped at the garden-gate.

"You will come in and have supper?" she asked.

"Thanks ; I won't to-night," Blaise answered. "I promised to go down to Robey, who will take me fishing. He will be gone almost at once. Tremain is going also."

Thomasine nodded.

"Yes ; go, then," she said. "I wish I could come too. You will be out all night. And I will be on the cliffs to-morrow afternoon."

"Yes ; I shall be waiting. Bring a big coat with you—mine was too loose. Good-night !"

He watched her go to the house, her frock moth-white in the gathering dusk. She turned and waved to him at the door.

He knew just how much of her display of interest was for himself alone and how much was fascination for the aeroplane and the novelty of having a new friend. She would meet him to-morrow, he told himself, not because it was Blaise Sanbourne whom she would meet, but because she would be thrilled, excited, amused. Any man who could thus please her was enough.

So he went down the hill to the town, and passed

along the cobbled pavements of the old streets which led him to the quay. He was late, as he knew he would be, and the *Emmeline* had already been towed over the harbour-bar, with Robey and Norman Tremain on board. She was drifting far out, her brown sails dark and clear against the still brilliant glory of the sunset sky.

Blaise hesitated a moment. The idea of a night's fishing had lost some of its charm. He did not try to understand why this was so. He thought of going back to lounge on the cliffs. But if he did that Tremain would be surprised ; he would have to explain. So he dropped down from the quay into the motor-boat which Norman had left for him, and one of the men followed to bring her back.

"The *Emmeline*," Blaise said. "I am late. Send her along."

He lighted a cigarette as the little boat sped through the water and over the bar. The lights of the *Emmeline* twinkled as the sails filled in the breeze. He climbed on board. Norman was busy with a great pile of net ; he looked up under his brows.

"Late," he said. "Saw the plane a while ago. Engine all right again?"

"Not quite," Blaise answered. He nodded to George Robey. "Sorry !" he said. "Good of you to wait !"

The sails filled as the boat swung round. They sped over the dark water towards the fleet.

## CHAPTER XXIV

THOMASINE went into the house. John was not in the dining-room, and Helen was upstairs with little Dick.

"Is that you, Tamsie?" Helen called. "Come up. You are late!"

Thomasine went slowly upstairs and pushed open the door of her room. Little Dick was crying loudly, with an angry, gasping sound.

Something seemed to choke Thomasine. She caught the child and kissed him.

"Poor little thing!" she said softly, as his screams ceased. "It is all wrong, Dick, isn't it?" She rubbed his head with a gentle hand, and her face, watching him, was pitiful and very grave. Here was a child sent into the world who had already suffered for no fault of his own, who could not prevent his suffering. From the very beginning this was the law—helpless suffering for humanity.

Something of rage took her. He was her child, her son, and he could not escape any more than she could; neither could she do much to help him. He, like every one else, could only endure. And half the sin in the world came from thwarted desires, desires which rose up terribly, overwhelmingly strong.

"I could be so good a woman," said Thomasine, holding her child in her arms, "if I might do as I wish. And I don't want to do anything that is wrong. I hate sin, and ill-temper, and disorder. These desires of mine are good and straight. Yet to gratify them is wrong. They say I am bold and selfish and hard. I am not, I am not ! . . . And, oh, little Dick, I love you indeed ! But sometimes I wish you had never been born, for then I should not have known you at all. I could not lose you now, but I can't be bothered with you. Why cannot you live and grow as the flowers do? Here are we with more capabilities than any other living thing in the world, and we may not exercise them. We have the chance of being so good, so free from sin and trouble, so full of life and joy, and love for God and man ; and then God Himself burdens us with responsibilities to crush us back, to keep us from being our best. Is He afraid to allow us a free hand? Should we learn too much, grow too far? Oh, Dick, why can't you answer and explain?"

Helen finished clearing up the litter of Dick's bath. She hung his clothes to air and left the room. It was rapidly growing dark. The child lay motionless and quiet, full-fed and content. His small hands, with their tiny fingers, were doubled up into fists, his lids drooped.

Thomasine thought of the aeroplane, of herself mounting up towards the sun. She thought of the moon rising, immensely large, orange-coloured, across the bay. She wanted to fly over the darkling water, alone with the night-wind as the silver light crept over land and sea.

And she could not. She must sit here in the quiet dark and nurse her child.

"I meant to bathe to-night," she said to herself as she rose and laid the sleeping child in his cot. "But I will bathe at dawn instead." She went softly from the room. The evening meal was on the table in the dining-room. John had not come.

"John is late," Helen said. "I wonder where he has gone."

"Don't know, I am sure," Thomasine answered. "We will wait a little while."

She sat down in his chair by the window, her face turned towards the night outside.

"You must look after Dick more, Tamsie," Helen said, after a moment or two. "I must go home soon, and I shall be worrying about him. He needs undivided attention."

Thomasine moved in her chair. "Why must you go home?" she asked, without turning her head.

"I cannot always be here, my dear. The boys have been very good to spend their holidays away. They would rather be home, I know. I must go back soon and get their winter clothes and send to them. You don't need me here if you would only attend to your duties a little more."

Thomasine was silent.

"You know you ought not to be so selfish," her mother went on. "You must attend to your house and to Dick. You have not the time to spare for gadding about. And you annoy John and your uncle by your absurd habits. Your uncle is very angry with you. Why do you do it? It is so childish and silly. You are a married woman."

There are scores of girls who would give a lot to have all your blessings, I can tell you that ! ”

Thomasine again moved restlessly in her chair, but she answered nothing.

“ I do not know where John has gone,” Helen continued. “ He went out very angrily. He almost quarrelled with his father after tea.”

Thomasine turned her head. “ Did he? Why? ” she said.

“ Because his father was angry with you. John said you were his wife, and you should do as you liked. Then he went out after you. He is a lot too good, Tamsie, for you to worry as you do.”

Thomasine stood up abruptly.

“ Did he really say that? ” she said.

“ Yes. And he said that what was said of you in Saltram was beneath contempt, that you and he could ignore it—— Where are you going now? ”

Thomasine left the room without a word. She passed swiftly through the hall and the garden. The moon had risen, and now shone with great brilliance, making the outspread country a mystery of silver and black, gleaming on the sea.

Thomasine was alight with love and contrition. Where was John? She called him as she went. He was not in the garden or the yard, and no voice from the barns or the stables answered her. She went down the road, hatless, still in her white frock. He had been harvesting in the field above the cliffs. Perhaps he was still there, angry and sore. Poor John ! Perhaps he was on the shore. She went quickly ; she reached the field where he had been working all the day. Yes, he was there.

She found him leaning with both arms on the fence at the farther side. He was very still. She went up to him softly, her eyes on him, half afraid. He looked so unfamiliar to her, standing there, his arms on the fence, his face to the sea. She hesitated, and even as she stood behind him he dropped his head on his folded arms. Thomasine drew back, instinctively afraid. She felt that she was looking at something she ought not to see—something private, to be kept from her. She hurried back across the field, and then turned and called him from a distance.

"John!"

He started and turned. She went towards him again in the moonlight. He did not move; he only watched her.

"Are you not coming in?" she said. "It is late."

"Yes, I am coming," he answered.

She was quite close to him, facing the east.

"What are you doing out here?" she said.

"I have been looking for you."

"Why?"

She faltered.

"I don't know. You were late. Come back with me."

"I'll come presently."

"No, come now. John, come home with me!"

"No," he said. He turned from her. She went close to him.

"Why?" she asked. "Are you angry with me?"

There was silence. Then he turned and swept her into his arms.

"Oh, Tom!" he said, holding her. She clung to him.

"What is it?" she said. "What is it? Are you angry? I don't want you to be angry—it troubles me. Tell me why I found you here. What were you thinking?"

He looked into her face. Her eyes besought him; they met his with a wide, steady gaze.

"I was thinking of you," he said. "Tom, are you happy with me?"

She evaded that. "I am all right," she answered. "Only don't be angry. Love me—understand me. You do, don't you?"

"I love you!" he said. Then he kissed her abruptly and released her. "Let us go back," he said.

She felt the restraint in his voice. The bitterness was still in his soul; he was not comforted. She could not bear it. She drew his face close to hers.

"Oh, darling," she said, "I love you! I will do anything you wish if it will make you happy. I can't bear to see you sad. Tell me what to do for you. Poor John! Poor John!"

Her lips were covering his face with kisses between the words; her arms were close and warm. He held her, his whole being thrilling to the magic in her voice.

"You are not sad now, are you?" she said. "You won't come out here and worry by yourself any more? Tell me what to do for you. I do try to please. I want you so desperately much to be happy. You will be, won't you?"

He did not trust himself to speak. He waited till her words and her kisses ceased.

"Let's go home," she said. "You want your supper. Let's cheer up. It is lonely out here—come, darling!"

They went together across the field in the moonlight. Nothing she had said had given him any comfort, yet she was trying so much to comfort him. Her voice ran on, afraid of the silence.

"I was going to swim to-night at moonrise," she said. "It would have been so lovely. But I am glad I did not. I will go in the morning instead."

"Don't go," he said.

"Would it make you happy if I did not? Would it? Tell me! . . . Very well, then; after to-morrow I never will again—never. Oh, you are pleased now, are you not? Poor old John! Don't let's discuss it. I will keep my word to you. You do trust me, don't you?"

He did trust her, there was no question of that. There was no vice in her, and he knew it. But he knew also her promise to him to do as he wished was, not because she loved and wished to please him, but because the sight of his trouble disturbed her. It was to save herself, to rid herself of any feeling of remorse or contrition.

Yet he accepted her sacrifice under any conditions. She must not make herself liable to be talked of in Saltram, in the "Silver Queen." He ground his teeth when he thought of it. He felt hot with rage. And he could do nothing, for to make any disturbance would be merely rubbing the matter in; he could, as he had said, only ignore it. He must be too proud to know of it, to make it worthy of any account.

With his hand on Thomasine's arm he returned to the house. He saw in the lamplight that her eyes were brilliant, that the colour was bright on her cheek. She was exerting herself to please, doing her utmost to drive from his face all hint of gravity and trouble. He could not but respond. He broke into a laugh and touched her hand caressingly, so that she redoubled her efforts, fanning the flame.

Yet when she lay in the grey dusk of her curtained room she thought of the bathe she was to have at dawn. It would be the last ; she would never go out again from her sleeping-room into the early light to swim in the cold water as the sun rose, nor sing again from the rocks as the boats came in from the fishing, nor come back across the cliffs where the dew lay, wetting her feet and skirt as she walked.

"I shall have to sleep till late," she said to herself. "I don't want so much sleep. Five hours is enough for me. I shall be so stupid and dull."

She awoke as the early morning light filled the room ; she rose gently, dressed, and slipped out, leaving John and little Dick still asleep. She did nothing more than glance at them ; after to-day, she would have ample time to watch them sleep.

Across the sea there lay a pallid light ; the east was faintly flushed, the sound of the water was low. She went down the road to the grey shore and hurried over the sand to the little cove from which she always bathed.

The flush of pink in the east deepened ; the weary, pallid light grew warm as she hastily un-

dressed. She ran to the sea and plunged in, her neck and arms snow-white against the blackness of the close-fitting bathing suit. The sun came up beyond the headland of Rame, the water sparkled, the rose-flush in the sky was a wonderful glory.

Thomasine floated on the water ; her hair, unbound because it was the last day, rose about her—long, heavy tresses, dank and dark. She turned over and swam, glorying in the loneliness, the magic of the early hour. She landed on the edge of the brown rocks which ran out into the sea. The fishing-fleet lay far out, the tall masts rocking against the sky. She watched. A brown sail ran up, another, another. The night's work was done ; in the fresh morning breeze the boats came heeling over the dancing water to the town. Thomasine laughed to herself with pure pleasure. She dabbled her feet in the water as she sat on the rock ; she began to sing, softly at first, then clearly, gaily, as the full sense of delight took possession of her.

The boats drew near. Away on the little stone pier men and boys were waiting to catch and haul at the tow-ropes. In the little town presently the blue smoke would go up from the kitchen fires, the men would tramp in, weary and hungry, with fish to be cooked for the breakfast. Thomasine could smell the smoke and odour of cooking, could see the brown-faced, blue-jerseyed men, see the bustling women, hear the clamorous children. The piles of fish on the quay would shine like silver in the light of the sun ; there would be much coming and going, much work and business, much shrill crying of flocks of thieving gulls.

Thomasine sang as she pictured it all. Her voice rang across the water. She slipped off the rocks into the sea. She swam lazily towards the oncoming fleet. She did not always meet the boats when she came, thus early, to bathe. Sometimes they were all back in harbour long before dawn, sometimes even at midnight. She drew herself half out of the water to watch them pass. They were heavy with fish, their hulls low in the water, their decks piled with silver and the great, dark nets. She saw them drift by, the men coming to the side to look across at her. She laughed and waved her hand to them as she bobbed in the water, her arms bare and white, her hair all about her.

She was still watching when the *Emmeline* passed. Norman Tremain called to her, his hand at his mouth; she could not hear what he said. She saw George Robey by the wheel, grinning at her, and leaning low over the side was Blaise Sanbourne, his hair very red against the nets behind, his face very brown, his eyes on hers, hard, eager, searching.

For the first time in her careless life Thomasine was afraid of a face in which a strange emotion was made visible. The laugh and the song died on her lips as she looked. She blushed hotly, and, obeying a sudden impulse, she dived under the water.

The boat passed on towards the harbour and the town. Thomasine came up from the coo depths, turned over, and floated on her back, her mind busy. Yet why, after all, should she have been afraid? What did it matter how he had looked? And what had there been to fear? She

kicked her white feet defiantly, churning the dimpling water into shining spray.

"Pooh!" she said. She was no longer afraid. She turned shorewards and swam slowly. Her last early bathe was almost at an end. She forgot Blaise Sanbourne as she thought of it. She waited at the water's edge, where the little waves kissed her feet, and looked back at the sea and the sun.

Her hours of romance, of magic, were over. To bathe at eleven o'clock in the morning, when the tide served, was prosaic, was conventional. There was no magic in that. Here in the early morning, when she had been present at the birth of the day, she had felt herself, not so much a woman, a personality, as a mere living body, radiant, without a responsibility, created merely to diffuse joy, to be joy, at one with the sun and the sea, the wind, and the glad beauty of it all.

"That is all over," she said, standing at the water's edge. The little wind moved her long, drenched hair. "That is all over. I shall never come again to bathe at dawn. They say it is wrong. But it is not wrong. The sun may shine before the sluggards are awake and the sea laugh and the sky behind Rame be rose-coloured and gold, but a girl may not come alone to see it, to join in with it, because men have small, distorted minds. They say it is wrong that I should sing from the rocks as the boats come home. I may only sing when they say, not when I will. Oh, I am bound about with these fetters of convention!"

She lifted her hands and wrung her hair, then turned slowly and went up the sand to the sheltering rocks to dress.

It was long before she came out again to the strip of grey beach which the sun was warming. She came carrying her towel and her bathing-dress, her hair unbound that it might dry in the sun. She began slowly to ascend the path to the clifftop, her face downcast, her black brows meeting in a frown.

Then suddenly she lifted her head and looked up. The sky was blue, and far up, lost in it, a lark was singing. She could not be any longer sad. To-morrow she would not bathe, but she had done so to-day ; she was not yet back in the house with the day's work to do.

She lifted her voice ; it rang out gaily with a rollicking lilt—

“Ship ahoy ! bear a hand there ! I wants a young man there,  
 So heave us a man-rope or send him to me :  
 His name's Henry Grady, and I am a lady  
 Arrived to prevent him from going to sea.”

Now the Captain, his Honour, when he looked upon her,  
 He ran down the side for to hand her on board ;  
 Cried he with emotion, “What Son of the Ocean  
 Can this be looked arter by Elinor Ford ?”

Then the lady made answer, “That there is the man, sir,  
 I'll make him as free as a duke or a lord !”  
 “Oh no !” says the Cap'en . . .

She broke off sharply as she came out on the clifftop. For standing there, as though awaiting her, was Blaise Sanbourne, with the light of the sun on his face, and breathing deeply as though he had come running from the town to intercept her.

## CHAPTER XXV

THOMASINE stood perfectly still, looking at him. She was taken by surprise and unusually confused. Then her gay spirit asserted itself. She laughed.

"Good morning," she said. "You are going back from the fishing? Oh, you ought first to have bathed."

Blaise recovered himself as quickly as did she. "Yes," he said. "Do you often bathe so early?"

"Oh, you must have heard I do. Every one talks of it, it appears. But this is the last time. I am never coming again so early."

"Why not?" he asked sharply.

"Because I find John does not like it. So I promised him last night."

There was a pause. He was watching her very intently.

"But why should you not?" he asked, after a moment. "Why should you not?"

"I don't know. I don't see why I should not. Most of the things I like doing I should not do. I don't think I am to blame so much as the conventional, well-conducted people are. But it is no good discussing it. I must go home."

"Look here," he said, turning to walk with her, "it is not wrong. Saltram is behind the times. Women do as they wish nowadays. They

are independent. I should not give up anything so enjoyable if I were you."

"But I have promised to do so," she said.

"Do you always keep your promises?"

"Yes, if I possibly can. Don't you?"

"Then you will come this afternoon, as you said?"

"Yes, of course. And you promised to give me a lesson in flying. . . . Oh, that is better! There are plenty of good things left."

She sighed.

"Isn't it glorious just being alive?" she said.

"Fancy being in a town! Fancy spending these wonderful days in stuffy offices and shops! And there is so much of it. I sometimes long to go away and see some of the wonders out there beyond the sea. I cannot bear being tied to one corner, even though it is a beautiful corner. But I don't see that I shall ever have the chance of going away."

"Why not?"

"You see, John can't go—or he won't. And there is little Dick and the house to look after. One can't very well drop things; they get in disorder and one is uncomfortable and scolded. So I must stay here, I suppose, and when you and your aeroplane have gone I shall take Dick out in his pram again."

"Prams are out of fashion," he said. "You should have a motor-bike and put him in the side-car."

Thomasine laughed.

"And he would look so funny, would he not? I wish I could, though! But he will get big. That'll be better."

"Will it? It is hard luck, though, for you," he said.

Her brows met. Somehow the remark jarred.

"Why hard luck for me?" she asked.

"You were not made for all that," he answered.

"You should be at Dyleshart, one of the community. You are alive. You are up to things. There you would have scope; you would be independent—free. Why don't you take a holiday there and see for yourself?"

"I cannot leave Dick."

"Take him, then. You need not be bothered with him. There are special arrangements for the children."

Thomasine walked on in silence, the frown still on her face.

"I will think of it." She stopped abruptly.

"Good-bye," she said. "I will come this afternoon."

"Let me walk back with you."

"No, go and have your bathe."

She nodded, and swung round on her heel. He watched her go. Everything about her spoke of wonderful vitality, of quick, hot life. Her height, her shape, her long hair, with its heavy ripple and its lustre of rich brown-gold, her swift, easy walk, her proud head, made of her a woman of perfect physical well-being.

He watched her out of sight. "A woman like that——" he said slowly as he turned away. "What a woman!" He looked ahead of the hours to the afternoon when she would come to him again and fly with him between the sky and the sea in the light of the sun. . . .

To Thomasine the morning passed with slow hours. The house was hot and dim, the sun shone between the chinks in the window-blinds and lay in golden patches on the floor.

At midday John entered. He looked at Thomasine's warm face, at her damp brows, where her hair lay and clung. There was in her eyes the look of one labouring under a tedious pressure—a pressure which he longed to relieve.

"I will come in at two o'clock, Tom," he said. "We will drive to Trekerret and catch the train to Plymouth. You would like to see Mrs. Wane, perhaps?"

"Oh, I can't go to-day," Thomasine answered quickly.

"Why not? If there is anything to be done, leave it."

"Oh, there is nothing to do. It is too hot to fag to Plymouth. We'll go another day."

"I thought you would be pleased," he said.

Thomasine looked up quickly and smiled.

"So I am," she said. "You are a dear. But don't let us go to-day."

"Very well. As you like. I'll come in at six as usual."

Thomasine nodded. She thought of Blaise and the aeroplane. It never occurred to her to mention her plan. She so rarely mentioned what she intended to do—people found out fast enough, and, generally, what she had done or intended to do was quite wrong and must be stopped.

She went up to her room after dinner and pulled up the white blinds. The sunlight streamed in, blazing on her hair, flashing on the silver on

her toilet-table, on the brass rail of her bed. She began to dress; she brushed her hair and bound it close and tight, put on a fresh grey linen frock, fastened her collar with her topaz brooch, took a coat, and ran downstairs.

"Are you going out, Tamsie?" Helen asked. She was sitting in the porch.

"Yes, Mother," Thomasine answered as she sped through the hall.

"Where are you going? I thought you said it was too hot. What is your coat for?"

Thomasine let the door between the front and the back of the house swing shut behind her without answering. She went out through the yard to the road and so to the cliffs. She found Blaise sitting on the rail of the enclosure waiting for her. She waved her hand to him. He sprang down and went to meet her, tossing away the cigarette he had been smoking.

"You're late," he said.

"Late! What time is it?"

He glanced at his watch.

"Seven after three."

"Do you call that late? But you are right. Seven golden minutes wasted!"

"Look here," he said. "Would you like a longer trip? We can fly right up the coast for miles, then come down somewhere and get some tea—you will be hungry—and come back."

"What time shall we be back?"

"Any time you like."

"By six o'clock?"

"Yes. That gives us almost three hours. Then to-morrow you shall have a lesson for yourself."

Thomasine caught the spirit of the adventure.

"Oh, it will be splendid," she said. "Don't let us waste a moment. We must be surely back at six."

"Why?"

"Because John and mother will be wondering where I am if I am not."

"Don't they know?"

"No, I did not say anything. You see, everything I enjoy is wrong—nearly everything. But this is not wrong, is it?"

"It is all right," he said. "Why not? Here you are. Yes, she is quite ready. I had her brought out and prepared. Put on your coat. Button it up all the way down. Haven't you a hat? Oh, a scarf—that's splendid. Now get in, and I will tie you."

He helped her to her seat and tied down her skirts. He pushed the ends of her white and yellow scarf inside the collar of her coat.

"Better so," he said. "They would blow in your face."

He looked at her; the yellow in her eyes blazed as she glanced up in the sunlight, her lips glowed.

"Oh, you are a good sort," she said under her breath. "Now fly, fly!"

He settled himself in his seat; a moment later the plane rose and sped with the wind high above the sea towards the golden headland of Rame.

Thomasine looked out fearlessly at the coastline on her left, at the sea below her, and the sky above. She looked at Blaise, motionless before her, bending forward a little, alert and steady.

The sun shone from behind, making the water dazzlingly bright. They passed over Rame and flew onwards towards the Start.

Thomasine forgot distance and time ; she forgot to watch the panorama of coastline on her left for the towns ; she knew only that she was moving swiftly above the world, that she had but to sit easily in her place to be carried thus from land to land, from sea to sea.

The golden world was but a ball beneath her as she passed with the wind. She delighted in the thought. She forgot John and little Dick and the house to which she was tied. But Blaise Sanbourne did not forget. Thomasine saw presently the earth rushing up to meet them as they descended ; they flew round in a wide circle, seeking a landing-place, and came to rest in a green field.

Blaise turned in his seat.

"Half after four," he said. "Tea now."

Thomasine moved and her eyes grew less visionary.

"Oh, it is splendid," she said.

"She is going well," he answered. "We must be near Portland. I thought we would avoid the towns. We shall be able to get tea somewhere about."

He loosened the straps that fastened her and helped her out.

"Tired?" he said. "Cold?"

She laughed and shook her head.

"No, I am just too happy for words. I forgot the time. You are good to remember. We must not be late back."

"We'll try not. Then you will come again—often. We will leave the plane here. There is a house over there between the trees."

"We ought to have brought sandwiches and a Thermos," she said.

"We will next time."

"Yes. I will make some special little cakes—*aeroplane cakes—gâteaux à la aéroplane.*"

She took his hand as he held it out to her; they hurried across the field to the house between the trees. It was a small white house set back from a road in a garden. The door stood open, and from somewhere beyond came the sweet smell of hot jam.

"They are making jam," said Thomasine. "Perhaps they will give us some. I suppose it is all right calling here?"

He looked about at the garden doubtfully.

"It is not a cottage, is it?" she said. "What do you think about it?"

Blaise hesitated. Before he could answer some one came through the door. Thomasine gasped.

"Jeannette!" she cried.

It was indeed Jeanette coming out to the garden for flowers. She stood on the step gazing in amaze at Thomasine.

"Tamsie! What are you doing here?"

Thomasine laughed.

"Oh, we came in an aeroplane—Mr. Sanbourne and I. You remember Mr. Sanbourne? We came down in the field there and were looking for a place to have tea."

Jeanette stood still, hesitating on the step. Thomasine kissed her suddenly.

"Oh, I am awfully glad to see you," she said. "I never imagined you were here! Are you staying here?"

"Yes. We came from Southampton yesterday. I meant to write you. In fact, I have written part of a letter. Oh, you have taken me by surprise! Do come in. Mother is here also."

Thomasine went in gaily, and Blaise followed slowly. His eyes were hard; the line between his brows was deep. Fate had played him an unkind trick. He had brought Thomasine to people who would blame her for the afternoon's escapade. But he could not escape—he must see the thing through, and put as good a face on it as possible. He followed Thomasine to the room where Jeanette led them. He heard Jeanette say as she opened the door, "Mother, here is Thomasine," and a moment later he found himself shaking hands with Mrs. Barrow and with her hostess, Mrs. Morris.

"We came in an aeroplane," Thomasine explained easily. "And we are to be back by six o'clock. And I am awfully surprised and pleased to find you here. It is just a perfect touch to a perfect afternoon. May I take off my coat? Oh, I had no idea you and Jeanette had returned to England."

She rattled on, excited and pleased. Blaise took the tea Mrs. Morris handed him, and stirred it in silence. He waited for Mrs. Barrow's questions.

"Isn't it strange?" said Thomasine. "John suggested my going to Plymouth to see Isobel, but I thought it too hot to go about in a train. And so I go by aeroplane, just for the fun of it, and find you and Jeanette!"

"Do you like travelling by aeroplane?" asked Mrs. Barrow.

"I love it."

"But it is dangerous, is it not? Does not Mr. Latimer feel anxious while you are away?"

"Oh, he doesn't trouble. He knows I shall turn up again safely. And he is very busy just now."

Thomasine had not intentionally evaded the question, but she had answered it safely. Blaise straightened himself, but he felt Mrs. Barrow's eyes were upon him.

"You are staying at Saltram, Mr. Sanbourne?" she asked.

"At Bonnoc, with the Tremains," he answered.

"Yes; Mr. Tremain is to have an aeroplane also," Thomasine put in. "He has a hangar on the cliffs. And I am going to learn to fly. I want to get a pilot's certificate, though I am sure I don't know what good it will be. I shall never have a plane of my own, and very little opportunity of piloting other people's. But it will be nice to have it—to know that I can do it. Don't you think so?"

Mrs. Barrow smiled. From her place at the tea-table Mrs. Morris watched Thomasine with shrewd eyes; Jeanette sat by the window, looking on, smiling a little.

"I know you feel like that," Mrs. Barrow said. "But I think it too much unnecessary risk for you to run. I am sure your husband will not like it, and you must think of your little boy. You are a married woman, my dear, and a mother, and therefore a very precious person."

Thomasine glanced at Blaise, and her lips curved into a faintly deprecating line. Then she turned brightly to Mrs. Barrow.

"You will come and see us start?" she said. "Do come. And don't let's talk of me any more now that I have explained how I dropped out of space before your very door. . . . I did not know you were in England. Oh, have you had a good time abroad? Jeanette's letters were so lovely, I wanted to run away from Bonnoc End and see it all for myself."

"We have had a lovely time," Mrs. Barrow answered. "We have, as you know, come back from Korea. Jeanette has some pretty things for you which she will send."

Thomasine smiled at Jeanette.

"You dear!" she said. "You will both come and stay with me, won't you? And we will get Mr. Sanbourne to take us out in the aeroplane every day."

Blaise was making polite conversation with Mrs. Morris. At this reference to himself he glanced up.

"Oh no," Jeanette said quickly, and paused. Thomasine remembered the motor accident.

"Oh, perhaps you would rather not," she said. She looked with pity at Jeanette. Thomasine was always generous with pity for those who were not as brave or as strong as herself; it was a natural insolence.

"But you will come and see me, won't you?" she said. "I have so much to say. Oh, it is five o'clock! We must go. I must be back at six. Jeanette, write me soon and say when you can come."

"We will go to the wall and see you start," said Mrs. Morris as Blaise stood up.

"We will all go," said Mrs. Barrow.

Thomasine put on her coat, and tied her scarf over her head. They all went out together. In the garden Mrs. Barrow drew Thomasine aside for a moment.

"My dear, does John know how far you have come?" she asked.

"No. I did not know myself until we arrived here. It was not distance we tried to cover, but time."

"You will not be home at six."

"No, I suppose not, but soon after. . . . I am so glad to have seen you. You will come soon, won't you? Good-bye."

She bade them all farewell by the wall where they waited, looking across the field, to watch the start. She went to the plane with Blaise and he tied her into her seat rapidly and in silence.

"We cannot go right back," he said after a moment. "We shall have to descend for some petrol—unless Mrs. Morris has any."

"Oh, go and ask her. We must be quick, you know."

He went back to the wall while Thomasine waited.

"She hasn't any," he said. "Does not keep a car. Never mind, we shall not be very late."

He took his place, and a moment later they rose into the air, circled round, and flew westwards rapidly towards the Start.

## CHAPTER XXVI

HELEN had put Dick to bed and silenced his cries with a bottle of milk. Thomasine had not come in ; the supper was on the table downstairs in the dining-room, and John was there also, waiting.

Helen went down to him.

"Tamsie went out before three o'clock," she said. "She did not say where she was going. She had a coat with her, so she may have gone in a boat. She is very late—it is after seven o'clock."

"She'll be in soon," he said. He got up. "I'll go out to the stables for five minutes," he said. "I want to see one of the men. She will be back by the time I return."

He went out into the early evening towards the stables, where the stonecrop and yellow lichens made the roof as cloth of gold in the warm light. He did his business there and went on to find the man he wished to see.

He was gone about a quarter of an hour ; he returned to find his father in the dining-room with Helen.

"I do not believe it," Helen was saying as John entered. She was standing in the shadow, but John could see her face—white above her black dress.

"You do not believe my word, madam?" George Latimer shouted. "You will have to

believe it. It was an ill day for my son when your daughter married him. The sooner you clear out of his house and find the hussy——!" He wheeled round, to find John behind him—John, with his face set like stone.

"I thought you would not come here again," John said. "Are you speaking of my wife?"

"Of your wife? Of that woman who rose at dawn to meet that red-haired fellow from Bonnec, who met him last night on the cliffs, who has gone off with him now in his aeroplane! That's your wife! I am speaking of her!"

The man roared the words; he was furious with rage. John's face neither changed nor faltered. His voice, when he spoke, was as even, as hard, as before.

"You came here to tell me this?" he said. "You could have saved yourself the trouble. If it is all you have to say, you can go again."

George Latimer stood facing his son, his red face aflame with wrath. He lifted the riding-whip he held as though he would strike. John stood immovable, upright, silent.

"You coward! You stay quietly here while that trollop gads about the country as she wills. You dare not lift a finger to her at any time. Serve you right now she has gone off and left you! Serve you damned well right!"

There was an instant's pause. Helen, still standing in the shadow, made as though she would speak. In the silence she could hear John's quick breathing as he stood facing his father, his head a little thrown back, his hands clenched, and she knew he was fighting for control.

Behind him the door of the room was pushed slowly open. A triangular patch of yellow light from the lamp in the passage without broadened and changed. The door was opened wide. In its aperture stood Thomasine, in her grey gown, her head uncovered, her hair a little disordered, one hand on the handle of the door.

"I heard," she said.

John swung round on his heel towards her, his hand outstretched as though she were exceedingly welcome to him.

"Tom!" he said.

She ignored his hand. She came into the room and the door closed behind her, shutting out the yellow light. She stood by his side, not looking at him but at his father, who glared at her from his greater height and uttered no word.

"I heard," Thomasine said. "I thank you for what you said of me. Are there no limits to the wrong which may be uttered? Is there no understanding at all in you for me? If I had not heard you for myself I could not have believed."

There was about Thomasine at this moment an almost incredible dignity. Her voice was low and clear; it trembled slightly, as though her emotion was almost more than she could control. But she stood there very erectly, her head high, her eyes on her uncle's eyes, her face white in the dusk.

"You went out with Sanbourne in the aeroplane!" he said surlily.

"Who told you I went?" she asked.

"I was told," he answered. "You were seen. This morning you were seen, and last night. It is true enough."

Thomasine drew a long breath.

"And you dare to come here and assert these wicked things of me? You listen to the evil talk of your labourers and your stablemen, and you come here and say these things to my husband and my mother in my absence? Let me tell you that it is not I who may be called a disgrace to your house—it is yourself, with your wicked thoughts! I should never have imagined such things could be said. How *dare* you imagine them to be true? How *dare* you for one moment think them true?"

George Latimer half turned from her.

"Ask her if it is not true," he said to John.

Thomasine turned her face to John and awaited the question. For an instant he looked at her very intently; then he slipped his arm about her.

"It is not too dark to see the truth," he said.

"Ask her," urged his father. "Ask her. She can't deny it."

John moved from Thomasine and lighted the lamp. He turned again abruptly.

"I'll not ask her," he said. "Thomasine is my wife—that is enough!"

"The more fool you! Do you think I should worry about her if she were any one else's wife? I'd wash my hands of her. I wash my hands of her now, and of you too! Why should I care what you do?"

He moved forward as though to leave the room, but Thomasine, with a gesture, stopped him.

"Wait," she said; "I have more to say. You have bidden my husband ask me if the tales you have been told are true, and he will not ask me.

So I will tell you here and now that I did see Mr. Sanbourne on the cliffs last night. I was there, and he came. He spoke to me. He had his aeroplane in the enclosure. I went with him to see it, and he took me up for about ten minutes. After that he came home with me as far as the gate, and then he went down to Saltram. This morning I was returning from my bathe, and at the top of the cliff I met him going to Bonnoc. He wished to know if I would fly with him this afternoon. I said I would. Why should I not? I cannot understand why I should not. So I went. We flew up the coast—oh, a long way, miles—and came down by a house for tea and a rest. Jeanette and Mrs. Barrow were staying at the house, and we had tea with them, and directly after started to come home. We had to alight near Brixham for petrol, which delayed us, and so I am later than I meant to be. But I have come in time, it seems; I have come in time. And that is the whole of it."

She drew away from the door as though to allow her uncle to go.

"You hear that?" he shouted to John. "It seems to me we are all mad! I——"

"That is sufficient," Thomasine interrupted, again with that regal gesture. "You will please go now at once. I have something to talk of with my husband. You have driven me past bearing with you and with people like you. You will hear to-morrow what I decide to do."

George Latimer wrenched open the door with such force that the handle broke in his grasp. He was spluttering with rage. They could not

tell what he said as he went out. The door banged behind him ; they heard his heavy step pass through the passage, and the slam of the front door shook the house.

Thomasine turned to John, and her regal dignity and anger fell away. Her lips quivered.

" Oh, John, what a pity ! " she said. She turned from him and sank into 'a chair by the table, looking up at him with appealing eyes. " Always fuss and trouble," she said. " Always angry words and cruel sayings. What harm have I done? "

" I wish you had told me where you were going this afternoon," he answered.

" And if I had? Is not every pleasure of mine somehow wrong? Is any one ever anxious to share my joy in things? I cannot bear it any longer ! I cannot stay here any longer ! "

She thrust her fingers through her hair, the palms of her hands over her eyes, her elbows on the table.

" I have wanted to be a splendid woman," she said, " and it seems I am a bold one, and shall be worse. Why—why—why may I not enjoy when I have so great a power of enjoyment? Why will you not share with me? " She turned to him, her hands outstretched. " Oh, John, you must understand ! "

He caught her hands.

" I do, dear," he said. " Let us forget it."

" I shall not forget it," put in Helen, who had been moving restlessly in the background. " You might have been killed. I am astonished at Mr. Sanbourne. He has no right to risk your life like that ! "

"Oh, am I always to be so careful of my life and my reputation?" Thomasine sprang up and whirled round. "What does it matter? Is it not better to live splendidly, unafraid, above comment, than to go always carefully and slowly through long, dull days? You think because I am a wife and a mother I must never do any of those delightful things which have an element of danger in them. But I *will* do them! I will not settle down into that prosaic groove you all say is marked out for me. I was not born for that. I am young, I am strong, I am alive. I can do things. I will not waste my life. I will taste all the joys that appeal to me. Why should I not? I cannot believe that women were created merely to breed and rear the race. I have other faculties, other functions. I want something more than the mere animal life. I want other interests beside this one of children and a household."

"But you are a wife and a mother first," said Helen impatiently.

"Oh, listen to me!" cried Thomasine. All the pent-up emotion within her, all the longings and desires born of youth and superabundant energy and discontent, found vent in a burst of eloquence. "You seem to think that all my faculties condense to this one point: that everything I possess of physical, mental, and moral perfection should only make me a better wife and mother. But it is not so. You cannot tie me down to the daily round in the house, to the rearing of my child and that alone. And you say I cannot combine what you call my duty with the accomplishment of my desires. But I tell you that no

one may ask so much of a woman that she cannot in consequence carry out her individual life, that no man ever had the 'right to place any woman under so great a restriction as I am placed. I tell you that I do not believe my business in life is to drudge day after day for my house and child. If I did believe it I should die. No one can own me, no one can command me, body and soul, like that. . . . For to what, after all, does that way of life lead? To dull days, to a commonplace round, to worn-out old age, to death. It is the same every generation—one endless round, leading to nowhere and to nothing. It is the everlasting sacrifice of one generation for the next. I will not do it. I will go away, since I cannot live here in peace. John has his son—he should be content. If he may choose his life, why may not I choose mine? I *will* choose!"

She broke off abruptly.

"You are extraordinarily selfish," Helen said, in a shaking voice. "I am ashamed!"

"Yes, you call me selfish, but is it not selfish to wish to keep me here like that? . . . To keep *me* here? Does not that occur to you?"

Helen glanced at John, but he was looking only at Thomasine.

"And John, then, must suffer?" she said.

"Do not I also suffer? And why should we have to suffer—either of us? Why may not I go and return as I like and be friends with him? Why must I give all or nothing? Don't you see my point of view? You must see it, surely!"

"But consider what people will say."

Thomasine made a passionate gesture with her hands.

"I do not care what people will say!" she cried. "Why should I care? They call my most innocent actions wrong and a disgrace. I do not care what is said of me—it is no use to care. I will do as I like. I will go away, and when I wish I will come back. I am free!" She threw her hands wide. "Because I am married I am not owned. I am my own mistress. I will not stay in this petty little place amongst these evil-speaking people any more. I will go!"

"Where will you go?" Helen asked.

"I will go to Dyleshart. I can work; I can make my way. And when I wish I will come and see John."

John Latimer was not the sort of man to be treated thus summarily. He was of the older way of thought which cannot lay down its belief of woman being the chattel of man. Thomasine, as his wife, belonged to him; he owned her—he must subdue and control her. He longed, beyond everything, for her to be happy, to be content with what he could do for her, could give her. He loved the home life inbred by the generations of his race—the man in the fields, the woman in the house, each fulfilling a part in the life of the other. He could not accept Thomasine's attitude towards life—he would not accept it. He could not see any good in it, any happiness, any well-being. He could not bear to think that she was about to break away from custom and tradition, that she would have a double life—one apart from him, in which he could not share—that she would join those

women who began their crusade against the existing order of things by riot and destruction, by a heedless disregard of their reputations, their sanctity, their lives.

His whole mind rebelled against this determination of Thomasine's, and as he looked at her—at her eyes, shadowed and full of unhappiness, searching his with appeal; at her lips, with their full, firm curves, their red sweetness, which he had kissed; at the whole fine woman which was Thomasine, his wife—his heart cried out against her words, refusing to believe that she meant them.

"Tom," he said, "don't say these things. You don't mean them."

"I do mean them!" she said. She turned her face towards him and saw the trouble in his. "I do mean them," she said.

"It is all absurd nonsense!" Helen broke in. "Why cannot you be rational and properly behaved? Your going to Dyleshart is out of the question. I am surprised that you should find it in you to say all these extraordinary things."

"There you are again! Everything I say or do is extraordinary. I *will* go! They will not call me wicked and absurd at Dyleshart."

"You cannot go," Helen said decisively.

"I will go!" answered Thomasine.

"There is little Dick crying now," Helen said. "I should be ashamed of myself if I were you! You have everything a woman can want. What do you think Dick will do if you go away?"

"You will look after him. He will be all right. Or he can come with me—there are arrangements at Dyleshart for children."

"No!" John said suddenly. "Whatever happens, the boy stays here. . . . Oh, Tom, don't talk any more like this," he said as the door closed on Helen. He tried to draw Thomasine to him. "Oh, I want you to be happy. I want you to be happy here with me. I have tried to be good to you. You shall do what you like if you will stay. I will try and give you more of my time. Tom, my darling, it is you who do not understand. I cannot bear that you should feel like this."

Thomasine drew away from him. The emotion in his face was too much for her to withstand; his voice broke on the words as he spoke. She felt a desperate, passionate revolt against the fate which made the way so hard for her.

"Don't!" she said. "There is no good in sentiment. I must go. You know very well you have only to talk like that to make me do as you wish. It is taking a mean advantage of me."

There was a little pause. Thomasine did not look round. She waited. At last John spoke again, and in his voice there was no longer any sentiment, any appeal.

"I won't stand in your way," he said. "You shall do what will make you happiest. But I make one condition: you stay away until you find that life here in this house, that the daily round, that your son, that I myself also, are more to you than anything else. You can return when you can tell me so. And until you go, or if you never go, we will not speak of this again. I shall never come to you at Dyleshart unless you send

for me in a time of real need. Neither will I appeal to you again or take any advantage."

Thomasine turned slowly; her hands tore at each other.

"Oh, you are cruel!" she said; "so hard and bitter! You know very well I don't want you to be unhappy. I want every one to enjoy himself. I don't want to go away from you for ever. I want to see you sometimes—and Dick. I may want to come for a long time—for months perhaps. And you could come and see me, you know."

John went very close to Thomasine, and his eyes looked into hers so that each saw the yellow light in the other's and the troubled soul beyond.

"No," he said, "that sort of thing can never be. Between you and I, it is all or nothing, Thomasine."

"But why?"

He frowned and drew back.

"For God's sake let this end!" he said. "You heard what I said—it is for you to decide."

He went to the door as he spoke, but before he could open it Thomasine dropped into a chair by the table and broke into a passion of tears.

"Oh, if my father were here!" she cried. "He would understand."

For a moment John wavered, looking back at that bright head beneath the lamp, with the brilliant glow of the flowers on the table beyond. Then he opened the door and went out, leaving her there.

## CHAPTER XXVII

JOHN LATIMER kept his word to Thomasine. All her discontent, all her wild longings for a wider life, had come to a head that night when she had returned from her flight and heard what her uncle was saying of her.

From exhilaration and excitement conducted by the aeroplane she had passed that night through a whole series of emotions, and when John came up to the bedroom he found her there, asleep on the bed, still in her grey frock, her face tear-stained, her loosened hair streaming about her, still sobbing softly as she breathed.

He had knelt by her to look long and earnestly at her sleeping face seen in the soft dusk; he had touched her hair, had held it to his face to cover it with soundless kisses, had almost awakened her with the shaking of his hands. He longed for her to awaken, to see him there, to draw his face close to hers, to kiss him, to say she had been overwrought, that she had not meant what she had said, that she would never leave him. But her sleep was deep. He covered her with a rug as she lay. Then he left her.

He wondered what she would really do. A day passed, another, and Sunday came. She said nothing to him of her thoughts. She was quiet

—much quieter than he had ever known her, quieter even than she had been when her father died.

He longed to ask Helen what Thomasine was doing, if she was preparing or arranging to go away. But he could not bring himself to ask. Of one thing he was sure: during those three days she saw nothing of Sanbourne, and she neither bathed nor rode.

On the morning of Sunday, as he went out to the stables he heard the church bells ringing in the valley by the town, and something of the pain in his heart died out. She would not go; she could not. How could he have imagined such a thing? She had been angry; she had not known what she was saying.

She was in the house when he returned. Helen had gone to church alone, and Thomasine was sitting by the open window with little Dick in her arms. She was very pale, and the shadows under her eyes were heavy and dark. She had suffered also these three days.

"Won't you come out?" he said. He was awkward when he spoke to her.

She looked up.

"No, thanks. I'll stay here with Dick."

"Just as you like," he said. She turned back to the child, and, after standing irresolutely watching her, he went again from the room.

The morning passed and the midday meal. Over the quiet house brooded that strangely indefinable feeling peculiar to Sundays; the kitchen and dining-room were full of the odour of cooking, of hot meat and boiled cabbage.

Thomasine endured it till the table had been cleared ; she saw her mother settle down for a quiet afternoon in her chair—she would read a little and then sleep, wrapped up in her shawl. One so soon grew old and dull and placid like that.

John stretched himself on the sofa in the corner, little Dick, full-fed also, tucked down in his arms on the cushion. Thomasine went out of the room and upstairs. The slow hours passed peacefully into Eternity. The tea-hour drew near, and Emma Jane—successor to Polly—pushed open the door and came in heavily with the laden tray. Helen stirred and opened her eyes ; her book was on the floor, her shawl had slipped a little ; she felt warm and full of sleep. She yawned and sighed. John, on the sofa, stirred lazily, lifted his head, and rubbed his hair with his hand, and, at the movement, Dick also awoke, put a small pink fist into his eye, and whimpered.

" Tea-time already ? " John said. He got up by degrees, the child in his arms, and began to play with him. Little Dick gurgled with delight, and John noticed suddenly the yellow which streaked his eyes. Young as he was, little Dick bore the mark of his race. John, seeing that colour flame out at him, paused abruptly. It reminded him of Thomasine. Instantly he was uneasy, anxious, afraid.

Where was she ? What had she been doing all the afternoon ? He might, now he thought of it, have spent the time, not in sleeping but with her. Was it any wonder that she went out so much alone, that she was so full of restlessness and discontent ? He had no fear of her because of

her adventure with Blaise Sanbourne ; he knew that at any time he could trust Thomasine. And yet—she was a beautiful woman and Sanbourne but another man. It was a dangerous game which she essayed to play with him.

John put little Dick abruptly into Helen's arms and went out of the room to find Thomasine. He wondered where he should go—almost certainly she would be out somewhere, and perhaps at a distance—on the clifftop or on the shore, or the other way and in the pine-woods.

He hesitated. He wished he had spent the afternoon with her. He wished it desperately. He could have gone just where she liked, and perhaps, after a little, she would have turned back to him with that little low laugh deep in her throat and her arms about him.

Now it was too late—the afternoon was over ; he had slept, full fed, through the perfect hours. He had sunk into that groove against which Thomasine so rebelled.

He turned back from the garden, re-entered the house, and ascended the stairs. He was experiencing an unutterable longing for Thomasine. He could not endure life without her, without her friendliness, her gaiety. She was the colour, the light, the warmth of his world. He went up the stairs to her room, and then, at the door, again he hesitated. He was afraid to go in. He did not know why he was afraid. He felt that if anything had happened, if she had gone away as she had said she would do, he would rather not know. For if he did not know he could be always waiting for her, always expecting her to run down

the stairs to him, or to hear her whistling gaily like a blackbird in spring. . . . But he could not impose on himself like that ; he must know the reason of this overwhelming fear of what he would find.

He opened the door—slowly—holding his breath. The room was, as it always had been, orderly, with its wide white bed, its glimmer of silver on the dressing-table, its two long windows wide open, their curtains flapping in the wind.

She was not there. He had known she would not be there. He went into the room. If she had gone, there would be a note on the dressing-table. There was a note on the dressing-table.

He took it up and opened it slowly, mechanically, as though he dreamt, as though he had no will of his own, as though he had been bidden to open it, and so obeyed.

He read it standing there between the table and the bed, and every word stood out for him full of distinct meaning. It seemed to him that he knew just what she would say—

DEAR JOHN,—I am going this afternoon to Dyleshart, where I shall stay until I can come to you and say that my life here is better than my life there can be. You said matters were to be arranged like this, but I would rather you had agreed to my suggestion that we might meet, that we might be splendid friends. I cannot understand why we should be otherwise, but I feel that you are trying to treat me as though I were a child. You have said to me, "When you do as I desire then I will reward you," "When you return and give up this idea then I will see you again, and you shall see Dick." Don't you see how cruel is this mandate of yours? It is your own fault if you suffer, and you will know that you are standing deliberately between me and that happiness which I go to seek.

But I will not enter your house until I can come to you and say that it is my most perfect home, that it contains all a woman can ask for or desire ; or until you come to me and say that you will accept me, not only as your wife, your woman, but also as your friend, your comrade, who may live her life with you and for you, yet still have time for other things.

This is quite clear, John, is it not? And you will know that I shall not forget, that I cannot forget what you might be. You and little Dick. Just the three of us. Each to live his own life, and at the same time to render his part to the other. Why not, John? Why are little Dick and I to live our lives as you decree? Who gave you such power? Who will give it to little Dick when he is also a man? Do you believe that you, that any man, is my master, is any woman's master by Divine right?

You will say that I have no thought for you because I go like this, quietly, while you sleep. Why do you sleep on Sunday afternoons, John? I had determined that if you followed me out instead of wasting the hours on the sofa I would not go yet—that I would wait and talk it over again with you. But you do not care for me—you care only for yourself and your name.

So I am going now. You will say to the neighbours what you please. I cannot bear to say "good-bye." I will write from Dyleshart, and if ever you come to me there you will find a welcome from

THOMASINE.

He read to the end. Then, lifting his eyes, he saw in the mirror his own face. Its very expression astonished him. It pulled him up from an abyss of despair to a height of rage. With a passionate grasp he crushed the letter in his fist, then let it fall to the floor. . . . She had gone. She had gone, quite finally, leaving just that letter—cold, calculated, and hard.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

THE Countess of Canis stood by the window of her room looking out over the town which owed its existence to her, to her wealth, her management of a difficult Government, her tact and resource in a stormy time. For on the death of her parents she had been left sole heiress to a princely fortune and a vast estate, and forthwith she had turned her attention to the burning question of the hour. So well did she succeed that now, after the space of twenty years, she looked out of her window on a flourishing town, and on a large colony, noted throughout the world for its wealth, its sanity and good government, its skill and accomplishment.

There was no question of equality between men and women. In Dyleshart woman ruled. The community was a nation apart. A woman must come to it prepared to work for the public good ; she must be prepared to submit herself to those in authority, to live her life for the community rather than for herself, and, above all, to be happy.

The whole root of the scheme lay in an endeavour to build up from a small colony a great nation of women, mentally and physically perfect, a nation ruled by women, and where the women fulfilled a magnificent ideal, which ideal would, in time, become the standard for the world.

It was a fine bright morning as she stood there looking across the town, which had grown wide towards the protecting walls that acted also as a frontier. The hills to the north bore on their southern slopes fields of corn, orchards, and market-gardens, also pasturage for large herds of milch cows. Below the hills, on the level plain, stood the houses amongst the trees.

The room in which the Countess stood and into which shone the brightness of the autumn sun was full of a strange, rich beauty born of the perfect adjustment of perfect things. It was not a room to be described, with its rugs from the East, its flowers, its books, its furniture, the tapestry on the walls, the white, wonderful statue of the Madonna amongst the strange blue roses at the far end.

That statue of the Madonna with the Child in her arms ! It represented the lifework of a girl whose deformed body had held a beautiful, a brilliant soul. They had found her one early morning kneeling before it, her hands, long cold in death, clasping the white feet, her forehead on her arms. Thus she had died, yet she lived again in the ideal she had striven to realize.

So it stood there now amongst the roses, which were themselves another triumph of the community, until it should be removed to a place in the chapel. The soft, velvety flowers touched the small hands which held the Child, and He lay, not as a God but as a babe in her arms, His head against her breast. One saw in the very conception of the beautiful thought the thwarted desire of a longing soul which, asking the best of life, had been denied

because of the imperfections of the body with which it was clothed.

Looking at it now, the Countess sighed. For these things made for pain, for heartbreak in a place which she desired should be, as far as possible, happiness unalloyed. It would take generations to stamp out, even from Dyleshart, imperfections of body and mind. And in the realizing, in the very effort to realize, this ideal, must be great suffering, much thwarting of desires, much twisting of lives.

Yet firmly she believed this could be done. This generation between the generations must suffer, must sacrifice. This generation must pay the price. The reward might be far ahead, but yet that ideal could be reached.

Her fine, pale face held lines of strong character, tempered by a great sweetness, in which was no hint of weak indulgence. You could not impose on her, nor equivocate before the steadiness of her grey eyes. And Thomasine, entering the room a little nervously, realized this at once. . . .

She had arrived in one of the Dyleshart motor-cars which ran regularly between certain great towns and the colony. She had been taken at once to the lodge of the portress, and had there been obliged to fill in and sign a paper, stating her name and business, together with some details. Then, as it was late, she slept that night in a white bedroom, small and clean as a convent cell, in the Hospice for Wayfarers.

At nine-thirty the following morning a messenger came to conduct her to the Hall.

She was astonished, as she passed through the

streets, at their beauty, at the houses, the architecture, the trees, the gardens. Women were everywhere ; she saw scarcely a dozen men, for almost all those who dwelt within the gates had already departed to their business for the day.

So Thomasine passed through the town and the great gardens around the Hall and to the room, or office, where awaited her the Head of the Immigrant Department.

Half an hour later she was summoned to the presence of the Countess herself, who chose at times to receive new-comers, not in the Audience Hall, where also all discussions and complaints were settled, but in her private apartment and alone.

Thomasine paused within the door, uncertain what to do. To the girl who had guided her she had had little to say, and neither had she talked to the sober-faced, low-voiced head of department downstairs, who, sitting at her desk, had asked questions and written the answers in an enormous book.

But in that sunny room, with its beauty, its rich perfection, its suggestion of comfort, of security, of personality, with this tall figure before her, this fine face, these keen eyes looking into hers, she was no longer sulky but intensely nervous. She had resented being questioned, but one could not bear resentment to this woman, who was so certainly a queen.

" You are Mrs. Latimer? " said the clear voice. " I thought you would prefer to see me privately rather than in the Audience Hall. Sit down—yes, there by the roses. Are they not wonderful? "

Thomasine was at once captured. The old instinctive love of plants, of growing things born of Mother Earth, came over her. She cried out in pleasure, and the colour leaped to her pale face.

"Oh, they are beautiful! Were they grown here? Oh, this is a triumph! Hardly purple at all—really blue."

"You love flowers?"

"I love gardening. I wanted to make it a career. Oh, may I tell you about it from the beginning?"

Then in an eloquent outpouring Thomasine told of life as she had known it, of life as, according to her understanding, it should be. She told of her father, her uncle, of John, of her theories and ideas, of her desires and determination.

It was an outburst remarkable for its egotism, its selfishness, its discontent; remarkable also for its desperate desire for an ideal, for its rebellion against the existing order of things.

It was supremely pitiful—its very eloquence made it pitiful. For Thomasine laid bare the most secret places of her heart, showed herself under the yoke she had so greatly desired to escape.

The Countess had met many women during her years of life as head of the colony, and she had heard these same desires, these same thoughts and feelings, expressed again and again. There was nothing new about them—they were merely a sign of the times.

Yet Thomasine in herself was new, for she was quite sincere, quite innocent of any motive for her rebellion. She told of Blaise Sanbourne, and in

her mind was no shadow of wrong because of him. She did not say that all marriage was a tie, a burden, but that her own marriage was such because, had she not been carried away by the glamour of an idea, she never would have married. And she recognized her responsibilities—the knowledge of them troubled her.

"I do not know what John and little Dick will do," she said. "They want some one there. My mother will stay for a time. It would have been so much better if John would do as I say. There would be happiness for both of us and change and enjoyment. But he will not. And though I will not be his slave, chained to him, yet I am his wife. What am I to do?"

She paused there and waited by the roses for a reply. And the silence was long.

"You shall stay here," came the answer at last. "Sometimes we have to send our would-be subjects away. But you may stay as long as you will, provided you keep the law. If you wish to take up horticulture no doubt a place can be found for you. But I must first say this : It is not the desire of our community that marriage as an institution shall be altered. Neither do we claim any equality with men. This community was formed for the purpose of giving right-minded women an opportunity for raising the tone of the civilized world, for setting up a new ideal to meet the broader requirements of the age. There is no question of competition with men—that is not the point. You will find amongst our subjects women who excel in certain forms of work, of sport, of ideas, but they fill their parts, not because they wish to compete with men but

because they can do these things. Simply that. We are proud of our long list of accomplishments.

"So you will understand that what you wish to do you will do, not because men can also, but simply because such things are possible to women.

"Women shall not be kept down. They shall perform to their fullest ability all that of which they are capable. I want you to remember this. Do not endeavour to triumph over men. They are capable of many things we can never do, but we also are capable of many things no man can perform. There is no question of equality or superiority at Dyleshart. We are not striving for a sex-war, but for the building up of a sane and splendid nation of highly trained, physically perfect men and women, who are good comrades to one another, while each preserves his ordained place, her ordained place, in the scheme.

"But you will find that in Dyleshart the happiest women are those who take full advantage of the laws and make for themselves a home. It is possible for the mothers to send their children to be reared and educated by the State; in many cases this is done. But we do not fully approve of it. The child should be with its mother, the wife and husband together. The heart of the world is in the home—that is a true saying. I tell you this, my child, because I want you not to lose this desire of yours that your husband shall be reconciled to your idea. At present he is wrong and you are wrong also. . . . But for the time, until matters develop for you, you shall stay here and have work and a place in the community. I will give you a guide to show you what is required of

you. Write, as you suggested, to your husband. Draw out from his mind all feeling of bitterness against you. We have much to do in that way. And remember that he is your husband, and that here in Dyleshart the marriage law is very strongly recognized."

To Thomasine there came a little of doubt and suspicion as she listened to the even voice, to the hints at law and order. She seemed to see no chance of excitement, of delight, but an austere colony of Right-minded Women. Her spirits sank. She turned as her guide entered and would have gone out in silence. The Countess smiled, reading full well what was in Thomasine's mind. She called her back.

"Come here," she said, and Thomasine came, still downcast, to be held by those white, delicate hands.

"Remember," said the even voice, "that Dyleshart strives, not only for good but also for happiness. The one is conducive to the other. And nothing of life and colour is left out, or of those innocent but possibly foolish things which women love."

She kissed Thomasine between the eyes. The girl looked up, surprised, and her face broke into a trembling smile.

"I love you," said Thomasine, for this was no longer a queen but a tender mother-woman—"I love you," then she turned and went out with her guide.

## CHAPTER XXIX

BERTHA WYNFORD, whose business lay in the Immigration Department at Dyleshart, was a tall, fair woman with a cold, well-cut face. In manner she was quiet and reserved. She was usually attired in the plainest of tailor-mades, with a shirt-blouse and masculine linen collar complete. Thomasine did not "take" to her.

"You are going in for gardening, are you not?" Miss Wynford asked. "I will show you first the house where you will live and then we will go and find Miss Riseley, the head of that department."

Thomasine began to hate the words "head of department." Life at Dyleshart promised to be unco' guid, not to say cut and dried. Things seemed to run on well-defined lines to a definite end, which was precisely a state of affairs she had endeavoured to escape.

She went with Miss Wynford down the stairs to the small hall at the side entrance most commonly used, and so out on the wide terrace and the magnificent grounds. They were on an altitude above the town, and as they paused a moment Thomasine saw an aeroplane pass across an open space beyond the houses, and while she looked it rose, circled round, and flew off eastwards.

Bertha Wynford noted Thomasine's intent gaze.

"We are hoping to get more land either to extend Dyleshart or to form a new colony on the same lines," she said, after a little silence. "Of course, Dyleshart has many imperfections—you must expect that—but I think all of us who care for the ideal we are trying to attain are full of enthusiasm. It is difficult now to remember the opposition we met and had to overcome before we could make even a beginning, but we are the generation between and we have had to bear the brunt. And it is not yet over. What we have obtained we must hold. And we want every real woman to stand for us."

As she spoke Miss Wynford looked at Thomasine as though summing her up.

"You see, we are even now divided into parties," she said. "There are those women who use Dyleshart as a holiday-place or for rest-cures—they come and go. There are those who join the community merely to get what they can out of it—money for clothes and pleasure, excitement and change. There are those who work wholeheartedly enough, but have their own ideas and try to forward them at the expense of every one and everything else in the colony. And there are others who stand for the ideal, for the highest and best, regardless of themselves, caring only for Dyleshart and their fellows. These are the patriots."

A flush of colour had warmed Bertha Wynford's pale face as she finished. Her voice had a ring in it, low as it was. Thomasine said nothing. Her spirits had sunk to their lowest level. She had come to Dyleshart to live her life as she chose,

and, behold ! she was expected to live for others, for the community, for the ideal.

They passed out through the gates into the streets, and she noticed, as she had not done previously, the extreme quietude, the absence of crowd and bustle. There were women shopping under the trees. Thomasine glanced at the shops as she passed. Farther on was a restaurant with little tables set out in a long veranda awaiting customers. A motor passed at a slow pace, and as Thomasine looked at it her eyes brightened. It was a long grey car, built for speed, and driving it was a bright-faced girl in a scarlet coat and cap.

"One of the cars of the Motor Express," Bertha Wynford explained. "We have no railway, so we use motor vehicles. There are the schools, and that building opposite is for the children who are brought up by the colony. It is a delightful place—huge nurseries and playrooms, a little chapel, a refectory, and a large garden and playing field. The children are kept to the age of ten years, then they go to the schools. If we go down that road on the right we shall reach the athletic grounds and gymnasium. You will find your way there, no doubt."

"But where are we going now?" Thomasine asked.

"To your house. It is close at hand. You will be happy there, I hope."

And, indeed, when Thomasine followed her guide into the wide hall of the house which was to be her home at Dyleshart she felt that she was about to be pleased.

For the hall was full of sunlight, which streamed

in through the open glass doors at the farther end, and through which one saw a hint of garden. Thomasine glanced at the huge open fireplace, at the comfortable chairs, at the bank of flowers below the stairs, at the deep amber rugs on the polished floor.

It all suggested pleasant chats at tea-time, lazy hours with a book or needlework.

From the curtained-off office on the right-hand side came a grey-haired, elderly woman in a black dress. Thomasine found a familiar face which she could not place. She heard Bertha Wynford explain their business, and then Bertha said—

"So Mrs. Latimer will just sign the ledger, Mrs. Warren, and we will go out again."

"Ah!" said Thomasine quickly. "I knew your face quite well. You won't remember me, Mrs. Warren, but I am glad to meet you again so happily."

Mrs. Warren took the proffered hand and held it a moment. Though her face was pale and the eyes sad, she looked entirely unlike the delirious, poverty-stricken, would-be suicide which she had been when Thomasine last saw her.

"Indeed, Mrs. Latimer," she said, "I do remember you. I have seen your face often and often since I saw it so full of comfort that awful day. And your good father, too—I never cease to bless his name for the good he found in life for me."

Thomasine was touched.

"I am so glad," she said, "that I am to be in your house. It is just luck! Everything is so awfully strange, you know."

They entered the office together and Thomasine wrote her name and some particulars in the ledger. She was then given the key of her room and the three of them ascended the stairs to inspect it.

"It is rather like a club, is it not?" Thomasine said. "All common rooms except one's bedroom. Oh!"

This last exclamation as the door was opened and she entered her room.

It was of good size, the windows open, short curtains flapping in the breeze, its walls deep blue, its furniture of walnut, its bed very white. It was devoid of all superfluities. Over the bed was one picture—the Madonna and Child.

Thomasine liked the room at once—liked its perfect cleanliness, its bareness, the blue walls in the sunlight, the breeze which flapped the short white curtains.

"That is all right," she said. "That's charming."

"You have some luggage perhaps?" Bertha Wynford said.

"No, nothing." Thomasine flushed suddenly. "I came with only a small bag——" She paused, confused. "So the sooner I begin to work the better," she said.

"We will go now and find Miss Riseley," Miss Wynford answered.

There followed what was to Thomasine a blissful morning with the head of the Dyleshart Department of Horticulture, while her work was marked out for her and her abilities tested and criticized. She wrote that night a long letter to John, telling him of all that had befallen her since she left

Bonnoc on the previous afternoon. It was a letter full of interest, of excitement, of enthusiasm. She told with detail of the morning, the afternoon, and the evening of this her first day. But as she wrote of the wives whom she had seen go down at the day's end to the gates to welcome their husbands' return, her pen faltered. She was suddenly and overwhelmingly homesick, full of longing for the life she had left.

She went early to bed, feeling very much alone and very strange. Queer lights and shadows came and went on the ceiling of her room as she lay awake. She thought of the deep, soft dark of her bedroom at Bonnoc. Only the light of the moon and stars shone in there. They were singing downstairs in the lounge. The clear, gay voices reached her as she lay. Now a violin throbbed wildly. Presently steps came up the stairs, she heard voices on the landing outside her door, then a staccato laugh, and the little crowd of women separated and went to their rooms.

Her spirits rose. She was to be happy—it was part of the plan, part of the ideal. So she fell asleep. . . .

Thomasine could not help making many friends. In her house, amongst the other inmates, she met Mrs. Drew, a young widow whose husband had been killed in an aeroplane smash. Her four children were in the nurseries and she herself was a jeweller. Thomasine found something to love and admire in her. Another who became one of her special friends was Anita Curtis, of the Motor Express.

As the days passed Thomasine found her level.

She was admitted to certain clubs, and she went in for sports and games. She joined the Theatrical Association, and save for a little uneasiness underlying her gaiety and occupation, she was entirely happy.

## CHAPTER XXX

THOMASINE wrote lengthy letters to John, letters which remained unanswered. This total silence troubled her ; it was the one bitter drop in her cup of happiness.

For she was happy—otherwise. She developed every day, she grew more and more radiantly alive, she was deeply interested in everything belonging to the community. She saw none of the faults—faults of the individual and also of the system. The Countess was her ideal, whom she adored with all the abandon of the schoolgirl. For in many matters Thomasine was still in the schoolgirl stage of development.

She slept deeply, soundly every night in her blue and white room. The bed was narrow, the floor polished, the windows always open. She had filled her bookshelf with some of her old favourites and with many new delights—beautiful books, printed, illustrated, and bound in the colony. Dyleshart books were on sale in all big towns and cities, and, like everything else sent out by the community, they sold quickly and well. For Dyleshart had acquired a standing prestige, a sure footing in the world of trade, before the novelty of its existence had had time to wane.

Thomasine's open window faced the east, and

the early morning sun awoke her to the delight of each new day. With the advance of autumn she awoke often in time to see the sky grow bright with the breaking dawn. And it was in those moments of each day that the half-confessed regret in her mind was most strong.

She lay thus one morning watching a damp mist dissolve and break before the first rays of the coming sun. She had been dreaming while she slept, but she could not remember the substance of her dream. She frowned and moved restlessly.

"Dreaming," she said. "What the deuce was I dreaming? Oh, heavens! Why won't John write? It is so senseless. And when mother writes she upbraids. . . . Well, it is their own fault. . . . I suppose little Dick is getting bigger every day. My own baby too. . . . I don't see why I may not see him. . . . I shall go down one day. He is my baby. I love him."

She sat up in the bed and drew the long plait of her hair over her shoulder and loosened the bow of ribbon which tied it. A first sunbeam reached her through the thin mist. She got up slowly and bound the plait about her head.

"I shall certainly go down one day soon. . . . I will go before Tuesday, when Lord Gillespie comes. I will go to-morrow. It will be quite an adventure, which is a pretty state of affairs!"

She got into her dressing-gown and went off to her bath, and soon ran downstairs to the refectory for breakfast.

Bertha Wynford was there breakfasting off hot coffee and rolls, the morning paper propped up before her. She looked up with cold blue eyes

as Thomasine came in, and her glance travelled over the radiant, healthy beauty of the girl in her short leather-bound skirt and plain shirt blouse.

"Breakfast!" cried Thomasine. "Morning, every one."

"Good morning," Bertha answered. Her glance fell again to her paper.

Farther up the table a small, dark-haired woman with very blue eyes was breakfasting and chatting with a bright-faced girl in a scarlet skirt and white blouse. These were Thomasine's special friends—Mrs. Drew the jeweller and Anita Curtis of the Motor Express.

"Late," said the latter. "Come along, Tom, I saved a place for you. Most of the crowd have gone."

"I'm in this week," Thomasine answered, sitting down. "As you would know if you thought. Wasn't I breakfasted and gone last week before the peep of day? And what about you, by the way?"

"Got an exchange," answered Miss Curtis blithely. "Had to go up to London with a special last night—Dr. Henderson sent for to attend a case. I waited for her. We got back at 4.30 this morning."

"It's nice to be you," Thomasine answered. "Wish I was in the Service, too."

"No vacancy," answered Miss Curtis, helping herself to an egg. "Billets are frightfully sought after."

"Besides, red is not my colour," Thomasine answered. "Yellow for me." She stroked her tie. "What's in the paper, Bertha?" she called.

Miss Wynford glanced up.

"Oh, just news," she said.

"Well, but what?"

Miss Wynford tossed the paper across.

"Read it, if you care to," she said.

Thomasine looked up searchingly.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

Bertha Wynford rose.

"I have finished," she said. "I must go."

"Anything doing?"

"Yes, plenty."

She strolled out of the room.

"Something has annoyed her, you know," said Thomasine. "I notice she is always cross if we are just chatting. I shall ask her about it. . . . And Lord Gillespie is coming on Tuesday and I am playing hockey on trial for the First Eleven this afternoon."

Anita was reading the paper, which she had propped up before the three of them.

"Yes, Lord Gillespie is coming all right. There is a bit here—nothing special though. You're a lucky beggar, Tom—going to the banquet though you aren't a Head or anything special. There's a lot of favouritism about."

"Favouritism!" said Thomasine indignantly. "Why, I am only going because I've got to act afterwards. Leading lady. Gala night."

"Well, I can act."

"Join the society, then."

"Can't. No funds."

"What do you do with all your cash?"

"Never you mind what I do with it," Anita said fiercely. "And I must be going, too. The

car must be inches deep in mud. I am going out with the one o'clock."

She stood up.

"So long," she said, and, her glance meeting Thomasine's, she smiled. "All right, Tom," she added.

"What *does* she do with her money?" Thomasine said when she had gone. Mrs. Drew wiped her fingers daintily and rose.

"She will tell you if she wishes," she said. "I must go, too, dear. I hope you are quite confident about the play. I should like to see you act on Tuesday. You are getting on awfully well everywhere."

"Ah, it is good to be here," Thomasine answered. "It is the right sort of life. And women ought to live together like this, you know. See how we enjoy our days at school. We can't forget 'em. It is satisfying somehow. I don't know why, but it is so."

"It is quite perfect, isn't it?" There was a hint of constraint in the questioning voice.

"Quite," said Thomasine. She got up, too. "Yes, quite," she added, looking down at Evelyn Drew's eyes. "And I must go."

They went out together. In the vestibule Thomasine put on her coat and heavy boots. Evelyn Drew went upstairs, and, thus deserted, Thomasine went out into the mist, which had shut down again and was heavy with rain.

The gardens of the Colony employed an army of workers. In the Hall grounds were vast glass-houses of every description. Acres of orchards, of vegetable gardens, of bulb gardens were spread

out on the slopes of the hills and in the sheltered valleys below. Numerous smaller gardens surrounded the houses and institutions of the Colony.

Early fruit and vegetables and huge quantities of flowers were sold in London and other cities, and the inhabitants of Dyleshart, too, were well supplied.

The triumphant success of the efforts to produce a blue rose had resulted in a fortune, nor was this the only great success.

Thomasine swung along through the damp streets, feeling proudly that she was a self-respecting unit of a rapidly developing Colony. She felt the great truth of the saying that women are the race while man is but the individual. Women could keep themselves and lose nothing of their charm. They were the life-bringers, the builders of the nations; their place should be first and highest and best. They faced death for new lives, they faced life, they worked for the right to live. They would be no longer as playthings, as children, as the drudges of the men. They would no longer accept any man as their owner. And, because of their freedom, they loved more deeply; they were good comrades, good wives, good mothers, good citizens.

Thus Thomasine, as she passed along the street with the light, swinging step of the athlete. She was going to the Nurseries Garden to attend the apple-trees which grew there against the grey wall. She entered by the side gate and fetched her tools from the shed where she had left them.

She loved trees more than any other growing thing. She loved them with a real love as though

they were able to understand and to respond. She cared for them as a mother cares for her child. They were less trouble to her than her own child had been. They did not cry out if she left them alone, they waited patiently for her to come, and her care for them brought money for pleasure. She loved the smell of the freshly turned earth when she dug down to the roots. She worked quickly, with strong arms and practised hands. The mist was thick; it almost shut out all sight of the long, low house just beyond, where dwelt the children who were not brought up by their parents.

The drops on her rough coat, the earth on her boots, the smell of the earth, brought a memory unbidden before her eyes. She was kneeling again in the orchard at Pendennis, and John was leaning over the long, grey wall looking at her with steady, interested eyes. Thomasine worked viciously about the roots of the tree as the scene came up vividly before her. John! The very thought of him took the joy and pride from life.

She worked at the trees—fine ones, with low-spreading boughs which, in season, bore sweet, yellow-skinned apples such as children love—passing from one to the other of them, getting warm with the expenditure of energy, and wet with the soft rain.

The morning hours slipped by. Once or twice the voices of the children in the house reached her, and again the little oft-recurring but unconfessed regret in her heart made itself felt.

Then out of the mist came a small, red-coated figure, which paused at a little distance, finger on lip, to watch. Thomasine looked up and smiled.

"Well, little one," she said. It was Evelyn Drew's little son.

He came nearer, his fair curls uncovered and rain-wet.

"I wan out," he said confidentially, and smiled.

"Did you though? All by yourself?"

He nodded.

"And without your hat? And your hair is all wet."

He put up his hand, flat on the top of his head, stretching his coat up sideways.

"Yeth," he lisped. "All wet. Like it wet."

"Give me a kiss," said Thomasine with enthusiasm. He advanced and kissed her with moist, puckered lips.

"You're a dear," said Thomasine.

His glance surveyed the freshly dug earth about the tree. He pounced suddenly on a long, brown object and held it up gleefully.

"All wiggly," he said, and turned and fled towards the house with the worm twisting impotently in his fingers.

"Little horror!" said Thomasine, and turned back to her task, her mind full of little Dick.

The tuneful ringing of the one o'clock bell in the clock-tower in the centre of the town called her from her morning work. She gathered up her tools.

"I should be perfectly happy if John and Dick were here," she said. She went towards the gate, carrying her tools.

"But John would not be happy," she said. She sighed. "One can't have everything, I suppose. Perhaps he'll give in and be friends."

She returned through the rain to her house. The streets were thronged with women hurrying out for their mid-day meal, and Thomasine, as she joined the stream, found herself studying the faces which passed. They were of all ages, these women, of all kinds, but amongst them all Thomasine found not one bad face, not one that was low or cruel. Yet it occurred to her that of strenuous, hard-featured women there were very many, and of women with shadowed eyes were many also.

"The harder women will carry the day," Thomasine said to herself. "The best class don't come in great numbers and the girls will either grow tired or grow hard. And the sad ones don't much care anyway; what they ask is a place to rest in and a chance to live. Anywhere will do."

From this thought her mind went on with speed. She saw presently a race of women able to fulfil the whole labour of the Colony, to govern, to trade, to build, to fight—a nation in themselves, hardened, strengthened; a new development, a new ideal.

"Hard as nails," said Thomasine. "Unsparring of themselves and others. And life will go faster as the wheels run smooth. Soon there will be no time for the gentler attributes, no place for them, no chance. As a nation we shall be respected, as individuals we shall not be loved. We shall lose our charm, lose all that endears, our beauty, our womanliness. We shall be a new sex. We shall be the little leaven which presently will leaven the whole lump."

She saw the future of the race vividly in her imagination—she had never before given it a

thought. It frightened her. It took away all the glamour of the great Ideal. She felt that they were all being ensnared—caught in entrancing toils which must presently make of them and of their children a new race, unguarded save by themselves, without love as they had known it, striving against every nation, every race in the world, just as men had striven since the world had known men.

Thomasine tried to turn from the burden of this thought and found she could not. It lay heavily at her heart, together with the ever-present regret for John and little Dick and with the sternly subdued restlessness which assailed her so often.

She went into the vestibule of her house, discarded her coat and boots, and fled upstairs to her room to change before she lunched.

The damp in the air had penetrated into the room, dimming the polished floor, blurring the rails of the bed and the mirror on the dressing-table. There was a yellow tinge on the silver back of her brush, and a chill, raw feeling in the atmosphere.

"What a rotten world!" said Thomasine, acutely conscious of and affected by such details. "I suppose care of the house is deeply inbred in us, and no matter where we may go we cannot get away from the innumerable horrid little things which must happen when it rains and the wet comes in, or when it shines and the colour fades out of one's carpets and furnishings. Oh, ye gods! It will take generations to raise a new order of women who can live serenely in the midst of discomfort!"

"We are all of us pampered," she went on,

slipping out of her clothes and brushing her hair, "and it is the men who have pampered us. And I believe they enjoyed doing it. They have done so much for us: taken care of us, housed us, given us heaps of pretty things; they have let us play their games and spoil their sport and copy their clothes. We should have done it if they had not let us, anyway. And all because we are fools. We can't do their work and our own, too—we aren't expected to. And they can't do ours. When I think of John and little Dick with no one to look after them now Mother has had to leave——" She broke off abruptly, not a little surprised. "Ah, well, that is only one side of the question," she said, to soothe herself. She slipped into her hockey rig. "And the other side is, that a woman must live her own life as well as her husband's life. That is all there is to it."

She refused to think any further of the matter just then. For she had seen plainly a germ of sober truth just waking into life in the midst of a mass of illogical ideas. She understood that what women want is not only what they possess and have always possessed, but all that belongs to men as well. There is no question of giving in return for what they take, for they have nothing further to give than life and love. Their one demand is to receive, to receive, to receive. They forget that their grasp is not large enough to hold all. They must relinquish some of what they have before they can clutch at what they desire.

"I shall speak to Mrs. Warren about the room," said Thomasine. "Specially about the silver. Of

course it is the damp, though. I shall have a fire up here."

She went down to the refectory to lunch. Neither Miss Wynford nor Mrs. Drew nor Anita Curtis was there, for Thomasine had deliberately delayed to dress, knowing she had plenty of time. She sat down by Shelia St. John, who played back for the First Eleven.

"Do you think I have any chance?" Thomasine asked anxiously, everything else forgotten before the question of sport.

"Chance?" said Miss St. John. "Of what?"

"Of getting into the First," Thomasine answered.

Miss St. John surveyed her with a critical eye. She was a weather-beaten girl, tall, hard, brown, with a roughened skin, a close-set mouth, a slight, almost unnoticeable deformity in one shoulder, which told the initiated of years of hard running, bent sideways, after a ball. She could hold her own at sport with any man—there was no question at all about that.

"Are you very keen on getting in?" she asked.

"Awfully!" said Thomasine, satisfying a healthy appetite.

"But you have not trained."

"Oh no. Must I?"

"Naturally. Otherwise, if you get in you won't stay there. You'll have to cut a lot of this grub, by the way. You are just a soft girl, though with the cut of a good player. You'll want a stiff training."

"Oh, but that's an awful fag!" Thomasine answered.

"I dare say. Most things are. Do you suppose you'd have a chance of a place in a team playing against England, for instance, unless you trained to a hair?"

"Are you playing an English team?" Thomasine asked, helping herself to a sweet.

"We are sending a challenge shortly," said Miss St. John. "That is the reason for this trial to-day. There are just three of you in the eye of the Committee—yourself, Miss Moore, and Miss James."

"Who's the last?"

"Miss James. Cook here, of course. Don't you know her?"

"What, Hilda James?"

"Yes."

"She's only in the Third."

"And heaps too good for it. We've been watching her for some time. Look here, you'll have to drop sweets and chuck the Dramatic Society too, and get to bed early at night. There's plenty of room for improvement in you."

Thomasine growled at this.

"I thought hockey was a game—a recreation," she said.

"Not until we've established ourselves as too good for a picked English team—men or women. And not then either, as we shall have the championship to keep up."

"Look here," Thomasine said, turning round to face the speaker, "when I came here the Countess told me there was to be no comparison between women and men, that we each had our own part to fill, and competition was out of the question."

"All piffle, my dear! Let me tell you this:

When the Countess started out on this scheme she was an idealist. She still tries to impress her ideas on each new-comer to the Colony, but she knows—no one better—that we are all striving our utmost to beat men on their own ground. We want to be best and first, and we will be. In two generations see what we have attained : we can hold our own against men who have had every chance since the beginning of things. Then look ahead two generations more—less than that even : we shall be at the top—first, best, most efficient, and the world will have a new standard to reach, new records to break.”

Thomasine lighted a cigarette.

“ Yes, go on,” she said, and her eyes shone.

“ Throw that thing away ! ” Miss St. John commanded. “ What good will you do if you fool like that? Throw it away. Women have enough bad habits without adding any more. Copy the good, the strong, the best, and drop all those fool things.”

Thomasine put the cigarette to her lips. For a moment she was angry. Could she not escape at all from other people's commands, from order and restraint? If she took her part in this woman's world, then women would force her to obey or leave her behind ; if she went back to the other world, then some man would take the reins. Otherwise, she must make her own will so strong that nothing could touch her.

“ What an awful fag everything is ! ” she said. “ I do things because I enjoy them.”

“ Oh, rot ! That's never any good. You just drift. You make no definite mark anywhere if you do that.”

"Don't want to make a mark," said Thomasine. "Just want to do jolly things when I like."

"You will soon grow slack and get into mischief. Wanting to do jolly things when one likes is a sign of the times. This generation is divided into two degrees—one lot who strain every nerve to achieve, to win, to do, and the other lot who merely want to enjoy."

"All of 'em selfish," murmured Thomasine, and the germ of truth within her expanded and grew. "We are all self-seeking, self-indulgent. What we want is some terrific lesson—a lesson for a nation. Just a great blow to beat this generation between the generations into shape."

She spoke in a low voice, and her eyes were dark and dreamy. Miss St. John got up.

"Anyway, it is not my business," she said. "I am going for a rest before I turn out. I'd put my money on James for the team. Moore is good, though—and keen."

Thomasine turned round for a parting shot.

"Awful bad habit, betting!" she said. "Bad habits appear not to be bad habits unless they let you down in form. That's evident, anyway. So long."

Thomasine finished her cigarette, more in defiance than anything else. There was a moody look on her face as she sat there, her chair pushed back from the table, her eyes cast down. She raised them presently as she leaned over to flick the soft ash from the cigarette's glowing end, and they encountered the amused gaze of another girl, who was lunching alone at the table's end, with an open book before her.

Thomasine still scowled. Doris Cotterell continued to smile as she read.

Thomasine watched her for a time, then dropped the end of her cigarette on her plate, rose, and went slowly up the room to where Miss Cotterell sat.

"What amused you?" asked Thomasine.

Miss Cotterell looked up.

"You," she said.

Thomasine looked her over—a girl she did not know very well, a girl with warm red hair, a skin like ivory, and velvet-brown eyes. Thomasine noted that her teeth were very small, very sharp, and very white.

"Well," she said, "and what about me?"

"Oh, just nothing. Only something which struck me."

"Tell me."

Miss Cotterell closed her book and stood up.

"Oh, you are like so many others—fearfully keen until the work begins. You asked me to say, you know."

Thomasine drew out her cigarette-case and opened it.

"Meaning smoking, for instance?" she said, and lighted up. "Have one?"

"Not now. Another time, thanks. I am playing in the picked team against you."

"Listen," began Thomasine, still puzzled, but not in the least angry. "What difference can it make what I do? I am fit; I am in form. I can smoke now and hit the ball later. Why not? There is no enjoyment in a game if you have to give up everything for it."

"You will find you are wrong. You may play well to-day—very likely you will ; but if you don't train you won't keep your place in a crack team like the Dyleshart First. Other women who have trained will beat you easily. You will find that principle holds good in everything."

"But just smoking——"

"It isn't just smoking. It is all the fool things you do—just as you like. You cannot possibly live any sort of worth-while life on that line. It is not what pleases you most but what pleases others. Don't you see?"

"But if I train, that will please Shelia St. John—you too, it seems. So then you are selfish."

"Not at all. We don't worry who plays in the team ; it makes no difference to us personally. We want the best we can get for the good of the team, for the good of Dyleshart, for the good of every woman who ever hit a ball."

She paused, and the little amused smile again touched her lips.

"Anyway, I must move," she said. "I've got to change."

The feeling of discontent in Thomasine's heart grew large. It made her restless, it made her sad. Yet she went out to the muddy field and the strenuous game none the less determinedly for all that. She took her place in the team, and her rivals, glancing at her as she waited—her colours standing out in aggressive gaudiness—saw in her a competitor both dangerous and to be feared.

## CHAPTER XXXI

THE lounge was full of the cheerful light of the rose-shaded lamps when Thomasine came down for tea.

She was a little tired after the game, but full of elation, for there had been warm appreciation in the eyes of Miss St. John as they had returned to the dressing-rooms.

"Rattling good game!" Thomasine had said. The other had merely nodded, but the approval had been in her eyes.

Bertha Wynford was sitting by the fire, close to the little group of women who were talking animatedly over the teacups. Mrs. Drew was there also, and Anita had disposed herself on the arm of her chair.

"Everybody here to-day," said Thomasine. "That's the best of Thursdays—half-day off and every one jolly!"

"I think we turn up in good numbers for tea most days," said Mrs. Drew, smiling. "I look back sometimes at my old working days in London, when my hours were from 8 a.m. till 7 p.m., with just one hour off at midday. It seems amazing to me how I put up with it as long as I did. I wasn't married then, and I had to work and look after my mother and my young brothers too. I

had no time to myself at all. It was most exhausting, and the same conditions prevail to this day."

"Didn't you get time off for tea?" Anita asked.

"Some did—the ones who lived in. Oh, women and girls in many of the biggest first-class firms are fearfully sweated! Fancy working for fifty hours a week for ten or twelve shillings a week! And I am speaking of skilled workers too."

Thomasine helped herself to tea, crossed over to Miss Wynford, and sat down.

"I've not seen you since breakfast," she said.

"Are you looking forward to Tuesday?"

"Are you?"

"I say, what is the matter?" Thomasine asked.

"You are awfully curt. Have I done anything to offend?"

Miss Wynford was silent a moment.

"Do you know why Lord Gillespie is coming?" she said at last.

"Yes, of course. It is a visit of honour from the English Government."

"And don't you see all we hope to gain? The right to practise at the English Bar and a grant of land to extend the Colony. All you think of is the festivities. I heard you say at breakfast that you could not join the Express Service because their colour, which is red, does not suit you. That remark shows you up at once. . . . It is all of a piece. Your personal vanity and glory and enjoyment must come first. The good of the community, the carrying out of the great ideal, is a long way behind. It makes me tired. You girls are all alike. When I think of what will happen later on, when we shall have to look to you to

carry on the work we have so well begun, I am afraid. You never had to fight for it as we had. I was with the Countess through all the storm of opposition and ridicule which greeted the scheme. I was with her while she and the others conquered difficulty after difficulty. I helped to pay the price. . . . And now you come, and others like you, and you find it all so easy, all to your advantage, so that you only think of the good time you can have as soon as you have hurried through your work. All we older women see this. It is not just youth in you and the others like you ; it is a great and most terrible selfishness. . . . Ah, I know you, Thomasine ! You have shirked all the way, and you shirk now. But I will tell you one thing : you will have to go back to your appointed task. It is the price of life, and you who live must pay."

Bertha Wynford's pale face, usually so cold, was flushed and warm, her blue eyes were alight. The words came quickly, hotly, from her trembling lips. Every one else in the lounge had grown silent, and Thomasine sat with her eyes on the fire, absolutely still, hearing every word, every breath, every quiver of that impassioned voice.

There was a long silence. Then Shelia St. John descended the stairs and joined the group.

Thomasine, looking up, drew a long breath of relief. The tension was broken. The light chatter, the rattle of cups and plates, began again.

"Who has the place?" some one asked.

Doris Cotterell, who had played like a fury all the afternoon and was now resting in a brown-gold tea-gown which matched her eyes, looked across at Thomasine.

"Mrs. Latimer," she said.

Thomasine flushed.

"The notice is on the board in the library," said Shelia St. John.

Thomasine stood up. It was either herself or Miss James, since the notice was in their house.

"I will just go and look," she said, and disappeared.

She came back almost at once, and Shelia watched her curiously as she came.

"Hilda James," said Thomasine, in a clear voice. Her cheek was bright. She laughed, but her eyes were proud and angry. "Hilda James," she said again. "Good luck to her! Let's see if she can join us."

Shelia stood up and extended her hand.

"You are a sport, Tom!" she said, with approval.

Thomasine sat down by Anita and Mrs. Drew. Doris Cotterell still watched with wise eyes.

"One would think her successful," she soliloquized. "But she is afraid we shall see her disappointment. She's a coward," she added presently. "It isn't pride; she's afraid. She wanted that place in the team. . . . Interesting personality! Write her up some time for the *Courier*. She'll never recognize it, of course."

Hilda James, diplômée of the College of Domestic Science, came to be congratulated.

"This is out of order," she said, accepting a chair and some tea. "I am on duty too. So I must not stay long. It is awfully good of all of you, and I am glad, too, of course."

Thomasine lingered for some time, then rose

to go upstairs. Anita stood up also, and they went together, arm-in-arm.

Some one in the lounge was talking politics. The voice was high-pitched and clear. Every one was talking. Shelia St. John and Hilda James were evidently hockey mad. Mrs. Drew was still holding forth on the lot of sweated women. Some one else was describing the gown the Countess was to wear at the banquet on Tuesday. And yet another voice stated that the woman's page in any magazine should be abolished.

Thomasine looked back over the banister rail.

"Listen to them!" she said to Anita, in a low, savage voice. "What fools! What an eternal clatter and fuss! What have they ever done? Oh, Lord, Anita! Bertha is right. With most of them Dyleshart is a new plaything, a toy. . . . And I'm one of them. Think of it! I've either got to drudge all my life for the man who owns me or be carried on *that* tide." She gestured fiercely towards the hall below. "Where is there a place in the world for women like me?" she demanded. "I have not found it here. And how shall I live if I go away?"

"You are tired," Anita answered diplomatically. "It was a hard game. Come upstairs."

They went up together to Thomasine's room.

"Yes, come in," she said. "I want to talk. I am going to rehearsal presently. I wish you were going to the banquet with me. It's so silly, making distinctions. . . . Oh, it is easy to say we could not all go. . . . Look here, my things were all damp and horrid this morning, and I rowed Mrs. Warren about them. She has had

them cleaned up. . . . Do you know, I knew Mrs. Warren before I came here. Do you know her story? Well, I won't tell you, then. . . . Anyway, she was ill, and in a horrid little room. I stayed with her till the nurse came. I got her to sleep. She went off quite easily. I thought I had some sort of power to comfort and soothe. Silly, wasn't it? Generally there's trouble where a woman is. Eve began it, you know."

Anita was sitting on the rail of the bed, and her face was troubled as she listened.

"It was a woman who gave the Redeemer His manhood," she said in a low voice, "and so indirectly saved the world." She glanced at the picture over the bed.

Thomasine swung round.

"Do you believe that?" she said.

Anita looked startled.

"Why, of course!" she answered. "Don't you?"

"I don't know. . . . Oh, I don't know! . . . I wish I did. When Dad was with me I did. I believed in everything lovely and good. . . . But did I? . . . Perhaps I did not really believe. He could make me believe anything, you know. He gave me beautiful ideas. . . . Well, and here we are, all of us, an innumerable host, all longing for better things, all going somewhere, if it is only to the grave. And why? What is the good of it all? Of what use is life when we have to spend our best years in getting a living? Of what use is the forgiveness of sins when we have to believe strange stories, of which we can find no proof, before we can be forgiven? There is no

free gift but death—the long sleep. That's all there is to it, Anita."

Anita's face had whitened ; her eyes were misty with trouble. She answered sharply, without any hesitation.

" I know what's the matter with you," she said. " You are a coward. You are angry because you lost the place in the team. And I am very glad you have lost it. I'd be sorry if you grew like Shelia St. John. Games are all right—in their place ; but she lives for nothing else. She hates children, and children hate her. Eric Drew screams and runs when he sees her. She only has a use for men because against them she has a chance to show off. She wants to be first, to win, to triumph. Do you suppose any man in his senses would love her? Would you go to her in trouble? Would you like her to nurse you if you were ill? She is loyal and true and genuine, but she isn't gentle, she isn't sympathetic. So I am glad you have failed. And, besides that, you have never had any proper training for your brain—no food for your mind. You don't reason ; you say what comes first. If everything is all right and good, you think fine thoughts and go out and swank, but at the first rebuff you sit down and whine. There are heaps like you—worse luck ! You're one of a crowd. And the pioneers of the new era for women must trust their work to such as you ! "

Thomasine had grown very white. She heard Anita's words, but she did not see the girl, who sat on the rail of the bed. She saw her father's face, white and worn and tired ; she saw the

daffodils and the sunlight and the grey, leafless trees. She heard her own words as she looked up at him, her eyes on his in salute. She had said she would be brave, that her sword-arm was strong. All the gallantry of her imagination had slipped away—all that had given colour and romance to life. Her sword had never been drawn. Her enemies surrounded her. Selfishness and doubt and vanity and fear had conquered love and faith. She knew that Anita was right.

"Why do you say this?" she asked.

Anita drew a long breath. She had expected a great anger.

"Because I know," she said. "I have seen people like you before. I will tell you one—my sister. . . . They won't have her here. She is in London now. She said, like you, that she would make a career for herself. And she grew angry and bitter at every rebuff. She's done for now. . . . That's where my money goes—you asked me, you remember. She was one of the new generation of independent women, and, now that she is down, perhaps even the ruin of her life may be of some good if it is only a lesson for you."

Anita's face was stern.

"I wasn't trained to do anything," she said. "I used to have a car at home before my father died. Mildred was all right while she had him to finance her, and she was straight. . . . Then he went, and there were just the two of us and no money—only debts. So I came here and Mildred went down. She said Dyleshart was straitlaced and proper. She had some queer friends, and she joined them. If it had not been for Dyleshart,

what should I have done? The world outside is bitterly cruel to a penniless woman alone. You can't do much either—or you won't. You can't make enough to satisfy all your whims out of gardening. If you leave here, what will you do? You will have to go back to your husband."

"I won't!" said Thomasine, her anger aflame at last. "I am stronger than you think. I won't go back, and I won't stay here!"

"Yes, you will, Tom." Anita came close. "Yes, you will. You will go back. Not yet, but soon. You are a woman right through. You will want your man. . . . Look here," she added, "I'll take you to London with me one day and show you what happens to women fighting the world alone. If you must make a stepping-stone of my sister, you can't press her much farther into the mud than she is now."

She swung round on her heel sharply. Thomasine was alone.

## CHAPTER XXXII

THOMASINE finished dressing for the banquet on the Tuesday night. The vision of herself in the mirror lifted her spirits from the depths of discontent to a height of gay delight.

The soft, shimmering fabric of her white gown was patterned with orange-coloured flowers. Her bare neck and shoulders were superb. She had no jewels, and she needed none ; her hair went back in wide ripples from her brow, and was held in place with a fillet.

The restlessness in her heart grew up under the wave of delight.

"I wish John could see. I wish John could see," she muttered, and frowned at the thought. "He would know then that I am not only a farmer's wife," she said. She took up her gloves and her coat.

A page-girl met her on the stairs.

"There is a gentleman to see you in the reception-room," she said.

"Any card?" Thomasine asked, surprised.

"No, Mrs. Latimer."

"I will go down."

"It is John," she thought, and she went swiftly, with beating heart. She knew, as she sped, that she longed only for him—that she wanted him

desperately, that no one else could suffice. She had been at a loose end since the night when she knew she had failed to win the coveted place in the Dyleshart Hockey Team. She had wanted to go to Bonnoc ; she had even arranged to go, but she had not gone. She had been uncertain and afraid. She had not been to London with Anita ; she had refused to go.

"I don't want to see. I don't want to know," she had said. "I hate sin and suffering. The sight of it disturbs me."

Now she went eagerly, sure that it was John who had come. And she would be able to talk to him, to discuss what she was to do next. And he would be able to advise.

She crossed the deserted lounge, dropped her coat on a chair, opened the door of the reception-room, and went in.

It was Peter who faced her. She saw the amazed wonder in his face.

"Tom !" he exclaimed.

The eagerness died out of her eyes. She was more disappointed than she knew. The wonder in his face drew her up with pride. She swept up to him, her hand outheld.

"I am awfully glad to see you," she said conventionally, and there was a constrained pause.

"Sit down," she said. "We must talk quickly. I am going up to the Hall. Lord Gillespie is here to-night. Can I send for anything for you?"

"No, thanks," he said, still staring at her.

"When did you come?" she asked.

"Now. I have come straight up. I have been away from home several days buying cattle, and

as I came back I thought I would break the journey here and look you up."

"Ever so nice of you. Ah, Peter, stay at the Hospice all night, and to-morrow I will show you Dyleshart."

Her eyes travelled over him. He was very tall, very broad, very brown. His blue eyes were a little puzzled and surprised. He was shy; his hands were awkward and restless.

"Poor dear!" said Thomasine to herself. She felt the superiority of her position.

"Oh, I must go right back," he said. "They will be expecting me. They will be glad to know you are all right."

"Are they all right, too?"

"Oh, yes."

"John and little Dick?"

"Yes."

"Who is looking after them?"

"Jack's got a housekeeper."

"Oh, has he? What is she like?"

"All right. She once won a gold medal for butter-making."

"Oh!"

There was a little pause.

"Why were you buying cattle?" asked Thomasine at last.

"They are for myself." Peter grew more shy, more restless.

"Are you going to be married?" Thomasine asked quickly.

He nodded.

"Who is it?"

"Cicely Penwarne."

"Cicely Penwarne! Why, Peter, you could do better than that."

Peter flushed and sat up in his chair. His hands were no longer restless; he was no longer ill at ease.

"What's the matter with you, Tom?" he said. "You were a good sort once. Now nothing will please you. I can't understand how you can leave Jack and the boy. Does being dressed up like that and banqueting with lords make you happy? If so, I'll tell Jack he's right not to answer your letters. I suppose you tell him about the fine times you have here. Some women are more brutal than any man. If it was not for Cicely, I'd have done with women. She is a brave girl and a fine one and as pretty as a picture."

He stood up abruptly, and Thomasine rose and faced him.

"You are making a hash of your life, Tom," he said. "I was in love with you myself once." His blue eyes blazed with sudden anger, for now her face was full of scorn and mocking amusement. "I thought there was no one so beautiful. But I would not give a snap for you now. There is nothing about you worth loving but your pretty face. And that won't be pretty for long. You have spoiled Jack's life. You have divided the family. You have made your boy motherless. I've done with you."

He turned away from her to the door—a tall, broad man, with heavy steps. And this was Peter, who had laughed with her, played with her, kissed her, adored her! Cicely Penwarne, whose father owned the flour-mills at Saltram, was more to him

than she was. Her voice reached him in sudden passion—

“ Peter ! ”

He turned at the door. She stood there, brilliant, beautiful, and lashed him with her tongue. She was furious with him and his Cicely Penwarne, with John and his butter-making house-keeper. She spared him nothing. She hardly knew what she said in her jealous rage and disappointment.

And Peter stood motionless by the door through it all.

“ How dare you speak to me like that ! ” she cried. “ You’re your father’s son, narrow and hard. You have cruel thoughts in your mind, as he has. You can go back to your farm and tell him I said so and marry your miller’s daughter ! It is nothing to me what you do ! I shall never see her, thank Heaven ! I want nothing from you. You can tell John that, too. I am tired of writing to him. You are only fit for the lives you lead ! ”

She broke off breathlessly. Peter had come close to her with a swiftness which was surprising. He caught her by her arms and shook her violently. She broke away and struck at him savagely.

“ Go at once ! ” she cried.

He captured and held her hands.

“ Jack should have beaten you,” he said. He held her by her hands, and his blue eyes burnt into hers, which flamed yellow, like the eyes of a tigress.

“ If you were my wife, I’d take you straight back with me now and make you obey. You cat ! It will be a sorry day for Jack if you ever

return to him. He's happier as he is. Anyway, I've done with you. I never want to see you again."

He released her roughly. She staggered and fell over the narrow train of her gown into a chair. Before she could recover he had gone out of the room, and she was alone.

Thomasine sat there, her yellow eyes glaring in a white, passionate face. The Latimer temper had been roused to a furious pitch. For some moments her hands tore at each other; her brain was hot with a terrible desire to kill the man who had said and done these violent things to her. She gnawed at her underlip. She was beside herself with anger.

Then her fury passed and left her weakly shaking. There came over her a great wave of emotion which she could not define. She pressed her hands to her face and broke into bitter sobbing.

It was Anita who found her there when she came in a little later for a book. She ran to the abandoned, weeping figure in the chair, dropped on her knees, and clasped Thomasine in her arms.

"Oh, don't, don't!" she said. "What is it, Tom? Tell me."

And with much bitter sobbing Thomasine told. She clung to Anita with her hands. She was shaking from head to foot.

"What can I do?" she said despairingly at the end. "What can I do? I have spoiled my life!"

"You should never have married."

"But I have. . . . And I can't go back. . . . They hate me now. And there is nothing to satisfy me here. . . . Oh, what shall I do?"

Then Anita also wept, for she had no answer.

"A woman can't get away," she said at last forlornly. "She has centuries of tradition, centuries of inbred instinct, behind her, and they must war with her new desires. It is this generation between that must suffer, is suffering so—you and Mildred. Wrong you may be, but you are leading somewhere. And others will follow. . . . Oh, can't you be happy in Dyleshart, Tom?"

"No, how can I? But I'd rather be here than go back to John. Peter will tell him what I said. I can't go back. . . . But I am free here. I can do what I like. Only I want to do better than any one else."

"Yes, I know you do. That is why the hockey business upset you. . . . Oh, Tom, don't cry. You must go to the Hall at once. Come upstairs with me and bathe your face. Cheer up, Tom darling."

Thomasine dragged Anita close to her. "You are a good sort," she said, her lips pressing kisses on the other's hair. "I am a silly fool. I don't know what I want or why or anything."

It was, despite these events, a radiant Thomasine who entered the drawing-room at the Hall, who passed up between the rows of men and women in all the brilliancy of full dress and who curtsied before the Countess, who was receiving with Lord Gillespie.

Thomasine looked proudly at the women who came first in the community. Almost all of them were accompanied by their husbands, but she, Thomasine, was alone. Other women entered, curtsied, and drew aside. The doors were flung

open, a sound of music reached the room, and the Countess, rising, passed with her guest to the banquet. The others joined in the procession, slipping into the places appropriate to their rank, and, last of all and alone, came Thomasine.

The banqueting-hall was ablaze with lights and flowers. The music filled it with a haunting refrain.

Thomasine took the place assigned to her, and found herself shoulder to shoulder with Blaise Sanbourne.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

"YOU!" she exclaimed as they sat down.

He nodded and smiled.

"I will explain," he said. "You are speechless, I see. I came with Lord Gillespie and the invitation was extended to me. A little difficulty in the garage delayed me, so I waited till the procession came out. Hadn't the nerve to walk the carpet under the eyes of the great ladies of Dyleshart."

Thomasine grew gay.

By a wonderful stroke of luck Blaise Sanbourne had appeared with magical suddenness to make this evening a time of delight. For Peter was gone. What did that matter? What did it matter if he told John what she had said, if John had got a housekeeper who could ably fill her place, if Peter was engaged to the miller's daughter? These things were nothing to her.

For she was Thomasine, brilliant, beautiful, gay, able to make her own life, able to do as she wanted, able to find a comrade for herself who would banish all her regrets, her loneliness, her fears.

"Oh, I am so glad you have come," she said. "You see how I am getting on. I have a splendid time. It is lovely. You were quite right about Dyleshart."

"I thought you would like it. What do you do?"

"Gardening. Yes, it is one of our strongest points. There are the glass-houses here in the grounds and the acres and acres of flower and vegetable gardens and of orchards on the hill-sides. We have a special market. And, besides that, the successes with the blue rose brought a fortune. Have you seen any?"

"Blue roses? No, but I have heard of them. And we all know of the gardens. What else do you do?"

"Act. And go in for sport. Also ride a motor-bike. I am keen on getting a pilot's certificate for flying, too. And, oh, I must tell you—they are coaching a rowing team. There will be a great boat-race later on, perhaps."

"Are you in the team?"

"In the reserve."

She looked down the long table, with its glory of flowers and fruit, of silver and glass. Her eyes danced from face to face. She looked for a long moment at the Countess's pale face; she was dazzled by the blaze of diamonds, by the sheen of the silver gown.

She saw Lord Gillespie in his uniform, wearing his orders, and she turned back to Blaise.

"Is it not splendid?" she said. "You see what we can do." Her eyes met those of Bertha Wynford and she grew subdued. "Of course, it is not all pomp and show," she added. "There are the hospitals and the nurseries and the medical and surgical triumphs. We all work hard and play hard. It is a good life."

"And you have no regrets?" he said, watching her.

"None."

"You are quite satisfied?"

"Quite."

He was silent for a while. Presently the banquet drew to a close. The only music was a low, sweet rippling from a single violin hidden behind the masses of flowers. He wished himself opposite Thomasine. He wanted to see her in her white and orange gown against the dark panelling of the room. He knew he and she harmonized together in that room, he in his black and white with his aggressive hair, and she, all white and orange. The only bit of colour outside the scale was the blue of his eyes.

She was so easy with him, so radiantly alive yet so strangely asleep. There had been nothing but pleased surprise when she had found herself so suddenly next to him. There had been no tremor, no blush, no shade of embarrassment. Yet from her bright head to the sole of her satin shoe she was a woman.

What, he asked himself, would she be like if he could rouse her, if he could teach her the game of love? His eyes narrowed as he looked at her.

The faint, persistent rippling of the violin was like water running over stones, the air was heavy with the perfume of the flowers, and Thomasine's hands moved deliberately, close to him. She still wore her wedding-ring. She had cast off her married life, with all its responsibilities and ties, yet she still wore her ring. She was at once incomprehensible and simple to him.

"Presently I shall have to leave you," she said. "You will see me again after the play. And we have all to-morrow, you know."

He nodded.

"Yes, all to-morrow."

The Countess rose; the whole company stood up with a rustle of silk and a blaze of gems. Thomasine, with a smile for Blaise, joined the long procession at its end, her train passing like sunlight over the dark, polished floor.

Blaise followed her, but in the outer hall she dismissed him.

"Go with them," she said. "I must hurry to the theatre. I shall see you again."

The crowd divided. Some went one way and some another till the play should begin. Blaise found himself cut off. He glanced about him, then slipped out quickly through an open door.

He found himself wandering through an immense conservatory where the flowers were seen dimly in a low light. In a wide space the black and white tiled pavement was broken by a fountain where rainbow water fell musically into a basin in which bright fish darted and gleamed.

He stood there a long time, and his thoughts were of Thomasine. He saw neither the flowers, nor the black and white tiles, nor the shining water, nor the glittering fish; he saw Thomasine. Yet afterwards he saw all these things vividly in his mind.

He roused himself at last, and retraced his steps. The play, he knew, must begin soon. He found some one to direct him to the theatre, and he went there quickly, still thinking of Thomasine.

The little theatre was full when he entered it and he stood at the back, looking over the rows of heads to the stage where she sat in a brilliant light. Some one touched his arm and motioned him to a seat, and he sat watching her.

He saw her as she strove her utmost to succeed, to win applause. She had never seemed so beautiful, so full of life, of fire. He heard her sing, clear and high and sweet. All the faults in her acting, all that spoke of the amateur, were condoned, and the whole crowded audience, feeling the magnetism of her personality, rose to its feet in a tumult of applause.

It was then that Blaise knew her. She was deeper than he could have imagined; she was passion-hot and unutterably tender. She could love, yes, and fight, too, and be all in all to a man.

"A beautiful woman," Lord Gillespie said as he rose. Blaise heard the words.

"I will take her away," he said to himself. "By Heaven! I will take her away."

He went out after the others and loitered, restless, eager. Some one touched his arm, and he turned. A girl in uniform gave him a note. He tore it open and read—

"Go to the conservatory by the fountain, and I will come."

He went down the stairs, through the open door to the conservatory, and waited by the fountain in the soft, dim light. He was very quiet now and patient, though she was long. . . . He looked up suddenly and saw her just beyond him, all

white and orange as she had been before. Then she curtsied to the ground and rose slowly, laughing.

"I am come from the Countess to you, my friend," she said.

He went to her and took her hand.

"I wanted you to come," he said. "You are wonderful, Thomasine."

"I am glad," she said, simply and seriously.

"And Ivy Barnet, was she good, too?"

"The dancer? Yes, very good. I have seen her before. She is a London girl?"

"Yes. She came here while she was ill and resting, and she stayed when she got well. She teaches dancing and singing. But she was not really at her best to-night. She is sad about something. I shall ask her why."

"I am sad, too," he said.

"Are you? Why?" Her eyes, lifted to his, were direct and clear.

"Because of you," he said.

Her colour deepened.

"Why?" she said again.

He put his hands at her waist and held her.

"Oh, you coquette, you coquette!" he said, his brown face close to hers.

She drew back.

"Don't!" she said sharply.

"But I must," he said, moving a step as she moved. "I love you. I love you. You aren't the child I thought. You are a woman. . . . Oh, you are magnificent. I heard you to-night and I know. I am glad to love you, Thomasine."

"Let me go, please. I thought we were friends.

This sort of thing will spoil that. Besides, I don't like it, it frightens me. Don't look at me like that. . . . Your eyes hurt."

"You can be kind, if you wish," he said, "and sweet. It is all in you—hidden perhaps, but there. And I love you. I want you."

His voice was hoarse and very low. He was holding himself in, afraid of her. But she thrilled. The reckless demon in her felt and liked its power, while all that was good and fine held her back, afraid. Fascinated, she outstretched her hands to the forbidden fruit, but feared to touch. . . . Then she laughed softly, low in her throat, her eyes grew larger and dark. . . . She reached up to his face with her hands, and, holding him, kissed his lips.

She was gone instantly, as a flash of light. The fountain was there and the flowers, but she was not. Her kiss was on his lips, the touch of her fingers on his face. He sprang forward. From somewhere amongst the flowers he heard her laugh. He sought her, but she was not there. The sound came again farther on, then a whistle, sweet, shrill as a blackbird's, then the pattering of feet, then silence and sudden black darkness as the lights went out.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

THOMASINE came out alone into the grounds, where lines of fairy-lamps made a magic of the night.

The rain had ceased, but there shone neither moon nor stars, only the many-coloured, twinkling lights along the lawns and in the trees.

Thomasine paused on the terrace steps. Her gown was hidden with a long, pale cloak, her satin shoes were shielded from the dampness, and her bright head was uncovered.

She was a little excited and also uneasy because of the game she had played in the conservatory some minutes ago. She half-turned her head to see if Blaise were coming. She wanted him to come, yet she was afraid and hoped he would not. And the gardens were magical, full of mystery. . . .

There were footsteps behind her on the gravel. She moved forward instantly and began to descend to the lawn. It must be Blaise ; but how lightly he walked ! Too lightly for a man. She looked back. It was another woman, small and slight. Thomasine recognized her by the manner of her walk.

" Going home, Ivy ? " she said.

The dancer came close. She looked up at Thomasine.

"Going home?" she repeated. "Yes, I am going home." There was a curious inflection in her voice.

"Anything wrong?" asked Thomasine.

"No, nothing." There was a little pause. "*Nothing*," said the low, husky voice again.

"That's why I am going."

"I don't understand," said Thomasine.

"Oh, I am sick of it—sick of the whole show! Sick of your rules, your order, your clean streets, your perfect people! I am going back to London again, to the pavements and the noise and the crowd—back to the theatres and the boys. I'd rather have the old way, with all its uncertainties and hardships, than this place of Dyleshart. What do you know of life, of the world? You ran away from your husband to see the world, and you came here, where it is sheltered and safe. You're comfortable here and you can play about. You don't care a button for Dyleshart—for its ideals. It's here to save women—the best women—from ruining themselves over the vote and to build up a nation. What do you care for that? It is nothing to you. You have never gone hungry and unsafe one day of your little unguarded life—not you! If you had, you wouldn't talk so glibly of what you don't understand. You are just a slacker—that's all. What's your job? The making of men and the making of women to mate with men. You're one of the race—not cold and sexless like the Wynford is. . . . I saw to-night what you could be, and I know what you are. And you got your applause. You can act, but you can't live. You've simply chucked it up. Look at me!

I haven't any one to care what I do. I can go where I like, I can do what I like, and I am going out to fight again. You are just a spoiled, pampered woman, that's what's the matter with you. I can see farther ahead of my nose than you can. You make me ill. Can't you understand for yourself? Oh, Lord! if I had your chances, what a life I'd have!"

"Look here," said Thomasine, with great deliberation, "I don't see why you are raving so. Dyleshart is all right; it's a great idea, a great community. And all those things you have said of me——"

"Yes, I'm glad I've said 'em. I've wanted to, often. To-morrow I'm going back to the dear, dirty old world outside the walls. I'm going back to be bullied and sworn at and underpaid and ill-treated—and loved, too, and admired. That's real, not like this Dyleshart. I'm going back to the glitter and the wickedness and the clear shine of fine deeds. It's better—that old world—than this new one, where one-half can't love and the other can't sacrifice. Women are hard and cold and their laws are like them. They weren't made for such things. I'd rather be a woman a dozen men loved for a few weeks than the woman one man respected for a lifetime."

The old instincts and the new were at war in Thomasine, who stood between. She walked a few steps with the other, whose shoulders were shaking and whose breath came in hard, half-stifled sobs.

"Did anything special happen to-night?" asked Thomasine.

" Nothing more than usual. Only the wives glaring at me because their husbands admired. Women won't own to caring about men, but they hang on to them tight. You find them jealous everywhere. And here there's a law : ' Thou shalt not wink at another woman's man nor have anything whatsoever to do with him.' "

" Which man did you wink at? "

" At none of 'em. He winked at me. They aren't worth a thought. They're kept too well in order. What men ! You've robbed and degraded them by taking their place away."

" Then you like the man to rule? "

" It's what he is for. To rule and work and fight and make love to us and get us what we want. And it's our job to be good to them and keep them pleased with themselves. Then there's no end of big things they will do. Didn't they think us lovely once? And we robbed them of that idea. We're all tarred with the same brush. Oh, Lord ! give me back the old order of things that the generations before me had. Then I'd have all I want from life. I'm pretty enough and clever enough and able to please. I'm just a fool-woman. I can play with a man when he's in luck and buck him up when he's down. So I am going back to London again."

Blaise Sanbourne had not come out, and Thomasine passed through the gates into the road.

" Perhaps you're right," she said. " I don't know. It is all such a muddle. I am going to wait here for a friend."

" A man? "

" Yes."

"Then I'll go on. Three's always a crowd, anyway." She paused a moment, hesitated, and came close to Thomasine. "Sanbourne?" she asked.

"How did you know?" Thomasine said in surprise.

"I saw you with him—I saw you with him. Then it's you he threw me over for! And it's you they applauded to-night. . . ." She turned on her heel abruptly and went swiftly away.

Thomasine loitered, looking after her, surprised, puzzled, uneasy. The lamps shone jewel-like amongst the trees. The windows of the great Hall were full of yellow light and the sound of distant music came hauntingly. Thomasine longed for Blaise. She wanted to play the game which is as old as the world. She tingled with the remembrance of that kiss by the fountain amongst the flowers. She was for any man to admire, because she was a woman, and any man was her captive if she could win him.

She knew he would come—that he was seeking her in the darkness of the conservatory or amongst the trees and shrubs on the lawn.

She saw him coming at last, walking towards the gate, which had closed after her as she stood without, separated from him by the wrought-iron bars.

He saw her thus, a tall, pale figure with the allure of a face half-seen. He came close to the gate, thrust his arms between the bars, and seized her hands.

"Let me come out to you," he said in a low voice.

Thomasine nodded.

He released one hand and reached for the lock, still holding her. He was outside before she knew. She drew back against the great granite pillar which supported the Dyleshart arms.

"I am going to kiss you," he said, and his arms came round her. "I will never let you go. You are mine."

"No, I am not," she said, and laughed.

"Mine!" he said. "By every right in the world," and kissed her.

She drew back from him, half-angry.

"Let me go!" she said.

"I will never let you go. Women and jewels are for any man to steal. I love you. I adore you. I worship you, Thomasine."

She laughed softly in her throat, but there was fear as well as excitement in her heart. She did not know this man, whose eyes were so brilliant, whose breath so hot in the night. The fear in her rose, dominating her. She broke from him and fled, holding her skirts high.

She heard him spring after her; his hand was on her cloak. It tore from its fastenings and impeded him so that she gained a moment's time. In her yellow gown, her shoulders and her head bare, she ran through the quiet streets with flying feet.

He was close upon her again; he caught her and swept her from her feet. Fighting madly, she was held for a moment while he glanced from side to side for an outlet.

"I will scream! I will scream!" she said. "Let me go! Let me go!"

"Scream then," he answered. "You'll be turned out of Dyleshart to-morrow."

"Oh, I will kill you! I will kill you!"

He still held her and turned back the way they had come. Thomasine rapidly gathered her strength.

"Blaise, put me down. I will go with you. We must not be seen. Put me down. You can hold my arm. Put me down, Blaise!"

He let her feet drop to the ground, but he did not release her.

"I must have my cloak," she said. "I am cold. You are quite mad. Let us go back for it."

They went back together and found her cloak by the roadside.

"It is soiled!" she said, and stamped her foot. "You are mad and rough. Take it up and brush it."

He did not release her as he took it up and shook it.

"Don't put it round me. It is muddy still. Brush it."

He threw it roughly about her. The terrible moment of white-hot passion had passed.

"Take your hand from my arm," she said. "How dare you bruise me so!"

He dropped her arm.

"Have I bruised you?" he said. "I am sorry."

"You are wicked."

"You made me so," he answered sullenly.

She turned from him swiftly, her eyes blinded with tears.

"Come back with me," she said. "Be kind to me. Don't frighten me any more."

"I'll go back with you," he replied. "I wish to Heaven I had never seen you!"

"Do you wish that? . . . Ah! let's go back quickly."

They passed in silence through the still streets to the door of her house. There, in the shadow, he lifted his eyes to hers.

"To-morrow?" he said.

"If you will not be rough."

She saw his face close to hers; she saw the drawn expression of it, the terrible brilliancy of his eyes. Her own face quivered, a blur of tears hid him from view.

"Go in," he said in a low, hard voice. He opened the door. She extended her hand and touched his.

"I am sorry," she whispered.

She heard him gasp and speak some words quickly under his breath, then she was inside and the door was shut.

Only Ivy Barnet sat by the fire in the lounge as Thomasine passed through.

"You're late," she said, looking up. "I was waiting for you."

Thomasine dropped into a chair and hid her face. Great sobs choked her. The dancer waited, standing by the dying fire, looking down at Thomasine with a curious expression.

"What is it?" she asked presently. "In love with him, too?"

Thomasine's fingers clenched convulsively at the crude question.

"What is it?" persisted the other.

"I want John," sobbed Thomasine. "I want John to take care of me."

There was a surprised pause.

"Of all the fools!" came the other's voice sharply. "I thought you were one of the independent lot. Here, stop that! Go up to bed. You can go back to your John to-morrow."

"No, I can't! No, I can't!" Thomasine rocked in her chair.

"Well, go to bed, anyway. I'll go up with you. You're spattered with mud and your hair is coming down. . . . Oh, do come! I'm awfully tired myself. I'll put you to bed."

It was when Thomasine lay in bed, her face tear-stained, her breath still breaking in strangled sobs, that she looked up at the pale face of the dancing-girl.

"You said you're one of the old sort," she said. "But I am of the generation between. I am old and I am new. I don't know what I want or why or anything. And I am deadly tired. Good-night, Ivy. My mother used to say, 'God bless you!' when she kissed me at night."

"God bless you!" said Ivy in a low voice. Her hand swept over Thomasine's hair, and her lips trembled as she gave the kiss. . . .

Then darkness fell and the door closed softly behind quick, light steps.

## CHAPTER XXXV

THOMASINE rose early, with one idea—to get away alone, to think.

“ I will go out early,” she said. “ I am working in the orchards on the hills. And there will be others there, so that if he comes——”

She dressed quickly and went downstairs to find the refectory almost deserted, though an appetizing odour of coffee already was in the air. Anita was there, however, and she had congratulations for Thomasine.

“ You in a new rôle ! ” she said gaily. “ The whole town will be discussing you after last night. Oh, I’ve heard all about it.”

“ Oh, I am quite ordinary, really,” said Thomasine ; “ but I like to be able to do things. I put all my energy into what I do. That’s all there is to it.”

“ You are early to-day.”

“ Yes, I am going up to the hills. I’m not coming back to lunch—can take what I want and have it there. It is going to be a fine day, I think, and it is spring again at last.”

“ Yes, and I am going out early. I must go now. So long, Thomasine. Hope the luck will continue.”

Thomasine waited alone. Then Ivy Barnet came

in. She was very pale—paler than was her wont. And she looked tired and ill. Thomasine spoke quickly.

“ Oh, it is nothing,” the dancer said.

“ You didn’t sleep, did you? ”

“ Not much.”

“ Why? ”

“ Oh, I don’t know. I was thinking. Rot, most of it, too.”

“ Are you really going to-day? ”

“ Yes.”

Ivy sat down opposite Thomasine, her back to the light, and was silent.

Presently Thomasine got up and went out to make her way to the orchards on the hillside. It was a fine, bright morning, and as the sun rose above the little town, the river flashed silver and the grey and red rooftops were gay. For some time she worked in the orchard, but there was little to do. She wandered across the fresh grass under the trees, calling now and again to the other figures who passed in and out at work, and her restlessness grew.

Presently she wished that Blaise would come . . . then under the trees she saw a single yellow flower, trembling a little on its pale green stalk, but gay in the sunlight and very brave.

Thomasine stood looking down at it with tears in her eyes. . . . She saw the daffodils again at Pendennis with the sun on them ; she heard her father speaking of his death, of her life, of love, of courage.

Oh, those high ideals ! How easy, how true they had seemed ! And yet—what a muddle was

life, how full of strange questions, of complexities, of unanswerable riddles ! Dyleshart—what good did it hold for her ? None. She knew that now—knew it undisputably. Neither accomplishment, nor glory, nor praise, nor independence either, nor freedom could satisfy her. Why ? Because she was a woman—because all these good things of beauty and wit and strength were only the attributes of perfect womanhood.

But did that mean she must go back to John and cook and clean and mend for him ? She thought of John when his face was alight, of his eyes in the half-dark when he came to her at night ; she thought of his brown hands and their strength. Such things were worth their price, and she knew now the meaning of them. Life with John need not be drudgery ; she held in the hollow of her hand love and happiness, delight and peace for John, and high ideals for her son.

She saw herself, in the inward vision of her mind, as a queen. Life and death belonged to women ; love, too, and the road to heaven. Women were responsible for their nation, for the race, for the world. They must seek, not a new life but a wider one.

And Thomasine thought of those bathes at dawn, of those long night rides which had caused such trouble. They had been the escapades of a child—a wilful child. And she had not understood love which beareth all things, which is without strife, without passion, without weariness.

Yet did she love John ? . . . Or Blaise ? What Blaise had offered her had not been love, but selfish desire. He had only cared to satisfy him-

self, heedless of what became of her. But now she knew of love—knew it instantaneously. It was quite quiet and unutterably strong.

Her heart looked out with longing for such quiet strength where it might rest. She wanted John, she wanted his love, the peace he alone could give. She lifted her head a little as though she looked out for his coming.

And little Dick! She thought of Christmas at Dyleshart—of the gaieties, of her own restlessness. She thought of the sweet pathos of the service in the chapel where Dyleshart women had come to kneel and worship the Child. It was the Child all women should worship, because children belonged to women.

And Thomasine cried out in her soul for little Dick, for she saw now that only through her children could she reach the world. It was her influence as a mother that must count—it was her sons who must carry on the great traditions of the nation, who must uphold her white ideals. And her daughters must learn that they, in their generation, might also be the mothers of sons.

Thomasine stretched out her hands to the flower.

“Oh, God,” she whispered, “help me to understand. Give me again what I have lost. Give me my old ideals, white and true, and my sword untarnished. And I will stand between the generations, doing my duty, paying the price. Let the old spirit come again into me——”

She let fall her hands. Before her, beyond the flower, Blaise stood watching her.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

"THOMASINE !" he said, without moving towards her.

She smiled.

"Yes?" she said. "What is it?"

"You coquette !" he said softly.

"I am not !" she flamed suddenly. "How can you follow my thoughts?"

He came towards her.

"I have got all the day for you, Thomasine," he said. "Come out with me. Let us go away somewhere. Give me a chance to understand you."

"No," she said.

He let the entreaty go out of his voice.

"Oh, but do come," he said. "The motor-bike. Have you a side-car? We can have such a good time, and the sun is drying the roads. Do come, there's a good fellow !"

It was all camaraderie and good-fellowship. Thomasine laughed.

"All right," she said, "I'll come. It's a splendid day."

"Whom did you ask?" she said, turning towards the gate.

"Some woman or other," he answered carelessly. "I said you were a friend of mine, and I asked her where I should find you. Then I came straight up. We can go right away, can't we?"

"I must change."

"Oh no, don't. You are ripping as you are! Don't let's waste any time—not a moment. I have to go back to-night."

"I shall not be long," she said easily. "And I can't go in this. Let's walk fast now."

He was silent all the way down to the town. She caught him watching her furtively. In the street he stopped.

"Where is your bike?" he said.

She told him.

"Well, I'll go there and wait. Don't be long."

"I will be very quick," she said.

But she was long. She came at last, very smart in her brown leather outfit, her face framed by a close-fitting cap such as a gnome might wear. She was very grave, and she did not look at him. He waited.

"You in the side-car," she said. "Get in. She is in good order, I know."

He sighed as though relieved. Thomasine started the motor as she ran the machine out into the road, sprang deftly to her seat, glided through the gateway, and, putting on speed, raced along the road.

There was a lot of traffic about—swift motor-cars, heavy wagons—and the man, sitting idly in the canoe-shaped car, watched and admired the brown-clad figure on whose nerve and skill his safety, perhaps his life, depended.

"Does she know?" he murmured. "The old woman can't have told her."

Thomasine never turned her head towards him

as they sped along. He neither knew nor cared where they were going. The day was full of the sweetness of spring ; the leaf-buds on the hedge-rows and trees were swollen ; there were catkins swinging on the willows, and everywhere a bustling of birds. Young, new life was about them in the sunlight as they sped ; the woman was quite close to the man who desired her. Presently she must stop. . . .

A tiny, old-world village, a whitewashed inn with a sign which creaked in the fresh wind—here Thomasine stopped, and, for the first time, looked at Blaise.

"We will lunch here," she said, "and then walk up to the Downs—high up, you know, in the wind."

She smiled at him. Her face was bright ; the brown leather outfit, with its jacket, its short skirt and puttees, made her just a handsome boy. She was Thomasine, with the tenderness of a woman, the gay good-fellowship of a boy, the good comrade.

He moved towards her.

"Tom !" he said.

She only smiled. She went to the inn door, nodded, and disappeared.

He did not follow her. She called to him through the window a full half-hour later, and then he found her in a little low-ceiled room, where a grandfather's clock ticked loudly and short white window curtains were guarded by sweet geraniums. There was lunch on the table, and she removed her cap. She could not know—it was impossible. He ceased to look at her furtively.

They went out after lunch, and up the steep hill

beyond the village to the Downs. She carried her cap, and her hair was bright in the sun. They sat down together on the short grass, and the wind loosened her hair. He watched her, his soul in his eyes.

"I am going back to John," she said, after a silence. She had felt that she had burnt her boats behind her, so now she wished only to return.

He drew a long breath.

"Why?" he asked at last.

"Because I love him," she said.

She sat up.

"I wanted to tell you," she added. "I have thought it all out. There is Dyleshart—well, it's good, but not good enough for me, because he will not come to me there. He cannot come. There is nothing in Dyleshart for him. I was unreasonable. And now that I know I love him I know what love is. It endures, it is capable of sacrifice. I can accept from him, too, because I am his wife." She turned her face towards him. "I did not know last night whether it was you I loved or John. It was John."

"How do you know?" he said vehemently. "Was I rough last night? I can be gentle, too. You do not know how beautiful you are. Thomasine, you are mine! The man you married is too hard, too cold, for you."

"He is neither hard nor cold," she said, "but he is strong. And he is absolutely faithful and good. If he were not I could not love him."

"You don't know what he has been doing all these months. . . . Oh, listen to me! I love you too. I love you so that I cannot live without

you. You and I, Thomasine, and the world you wanted to see—it is all there for you, my girl. You shall see Italy and Egypt ; you shall see the old and the new, all that is beautiful and wonderful, all the shifting interchange of race and colour and creed. You can't resist it, Tom. You must come. It is I who can give you all you want—not John. Turn your face to me. Do you know how magnificent you are? And you would hide yourself in one little corner of the world ! ”

He was kneeling by her, holding her arm.

“ You are of the new race,” he said. “ You don't believe too deeply in the marriage laws. It is not by book and candle that a marriage is made—it is the absolute fitness of the man and the woman. And there is my love for you—take it, my dear ! I can give you all you want.”

She turned her face and looked at him, and he saw in her eyes that she knew.

He drew back from her and buried his face in his arm. There was a long silence.

“ Yes,” she said at last, speaking evenly, “ Mrs. Warren told me when I went in to change. You had called for me and she saw you. She was crying when I went in. . . . *You* are responsible for her daughter's death. . . . I knew when she told me that nothing you could say would tempt me again. I don't want to talk of it ; I don't even judge you, but I know you now. . . . So you will not speak to me of love or of John. . . . And there is Ivy Barnet, too,” she added presently. “ She said you threw her over for me. Perhaps there are other women. But at least I am not one.”

Blaise Sanbourne turned right away from her.

She was not looking at him; she was looking across the wind-swept, open country to the clear distance where the blue sky and the world seemed to meet. Her eyes were serious and dark; the yellow in them could not be seen.

"I have no right to judge you," she said. "I should be presumptuous to do that. And I don't turn from you because of it. It is a terrible, a cruel thing to have happened, but it does not repel me. Last night for a little while I thought—you loved me, and it troubled me to think that. I was glad to think you found me lovable. That was just conceit. But I was uneasy. I did not want you to love me. . . . I kept thinking of John . . . and of what Love is.

"You see, it is like this with me: I picture things to myself. And I saw Love last night as something so wonderful that I could not sleep. I saw it was quiet with the quietness of eternal peace, strong with an unwearying strength, able to endure, to accept, to sacrifice. . . . And I saw it could be content to love—it need demand nothing in return. It was the most beautiful, the most wonderful thing in the world, and I was in love with Love. Do you understand?

"And then I was lonely. I wanted some one who would take care of me quietly, strongly; who would not drag me through endless emotion or handle me roughly. And I kept thinking of you and of John. . . . And in the morning you came to me. . . ."

The low, even voice paused a moment. Neither the man nor the woman moved. The wind blew strongly, full of the scent of the gorse; a bird

was calling in the distance, and the blue bow of sky curved about the warm earth.

"But then she told me," the low voice went on. "And then I was sure of your feeling towards me. It was not love at all—it was wicked. You were a brute to one woman—two women—how many? . . . You have nothing to give me like my vision of Love."

It was then that Blaise turned. He threw himself round close to her, and she noted again the dominant note of colour he made—the red, the blue, the brown of his face and eyes and hair. And she noted, too, that his lips were twisted and bitten, and his eyes like flames.

"I do love you," he said; "I do love you! Ivy Barnet was never anything to me. What is past is past, and what is to come is to come; but there never has been, and there never will be, any other woman like you. . . . As for your vision of Love," he added violently, "it is unlike you to talk like that—you prating of peace and ideals! It is strong arms and warm kisses that should be your portion, Thomasine, you magnificent woman!"

He stopped, breathless. She sat looking at him, her eyes dark and still.

"Think of it all," he said, "all we could do—you and I. There's all this fine world for us to wander over, all manner of trails to follow. Think of the long days together and the camp-fire at nights. We are nomads, both of us—and game. . . . And think of the dull days at Saltram. . . . You wanted your chance. I am offering all you ever desired, and you can't resist it, Tom."

"No," she said slowly, "but I can resist you."

. . . And Saltram will not be narrow, for I shall have so much to do. I've my house to keep, my son to bring up. I shall teach him to ride and to swim. He shall do what I would do if I were a man. And he'll run straight. . . . Oh, think of it ! What else is there ? How can anything else satisfy me ? Why, I am a woman ! ”

He flung away from her. She seemed invincible, supremely sure and therefore supremely strong.

“ You'll buy an embroidery frame ! ” he said furiously.

“ I'll be too busy with a rolling-pin ! ” she replied, and laughed.

She stretched out her hand to him.

“ Look here,” she said, “ you can't understand all this change in me, but I am my father's daughter, after all. And he was good. . . . There is a lot in heredity. It is that that will save us—the countless generations of home-women behind us. We are all rather mad just now, but we shall go back to our men, and go back the wiser for having tried the other way. We shall not be ignorant or foolish any more. We shall be what I am going to be—just splendid ! ”

She stood up and brushed down her skirt. Blaise, too, rose, and they faced each other. Never before had she been so desirable, never before had she so appealed to him.

“ And me ? ” he said. The flame had gone from his eyes, and his lips were still. “ And what about me ? Will you shut me out of your life because of my sin ? ”

“ No,” she said, “ certainly not ! I don't know what led to it. But I can't condone it, for it

proves that you can be very brutal, very unrestrained, very cruel. You must go away from me—because of last night. But when you feel you can see me without anything of evil in your mind, then come back and we will have some better times all together."

"I shall never come back," he said heavily.

"I hope you will," she said.

"Look here," he said, "last night you tempted me."

"The old excuse! And even if I did, I was a fool-girl then. Now I have come to myself. I *know*. That is why I am going away. I am not punishing you. I am trying to save you—and myself."

They stood together on the open stretch of Downs, looking across the country. Thomasine's eyes were those of a visionary. There was a long pause; then she turned and walked slowly over the short grass of the Down. But Blaise did not follow. He still stood there, as though he had not marked that she had moved.

Thomasine looked back at him, then continued to walk on slowly; but still he did not come.

"Blaise!" she called at last. "Are you coming?"

He came slowly towards her. They walked together in silence.

The gorse blazed in the sunlight, the wind blew Thomasine's hair. Her step was light, with a long swing—the step of a woman who does not easily tire. Close to the man she walked through the sunlight and the perfume, yet he felt that her very comradeship set her at a distance, while it added to her charm. He thought of her with him

in the life he had pictured to her—the long days in the open places ; the wandering, the working, the fighting ; the camp-fire at night ; the sleep till dawn in the tent under the light of the stars. . . . Oh, how could she resist? What was this new strength, this seeing of visions, this building up of ideals? His silence was broken by a cry.

"Oh, I can't bear it, Tom. Oh, my God ! I can't bear it ! You must have some pity on me."

He gripped her arm and swung her round, facing him.

"I can't bear it," he said again. "I can't see it as you do. You must do something for me. I can't go alone all my life because you want to go back."

She put her hand on his.

"Yes, you can bear it, Blaise," she said. "It is because you have it in you to bear it that I like you so."

"Don't say you like me," he said. "You can't understand what it will be for me. Where can I go? I have pictured you everywhere. Now I cannot go alone. . . . And you did it yourself—deliberately." He broke off. He still held her arm.

"Smell the gorse," he said. "I shall see you every time it comes near me. And that bird chirping down there . . . hear it? And the sound of the water falling. Why, even the 'plane will speak of you—do you remember that day? You are everywhere, Tom, in sight and scent and sound, in speed, in sunlight, in the night. How can I escape? Oh, I want you, I want you. . . . Just you and the blessed old world to roam in—oh, my God !"

He broke off and turned from her. Before she knew what he was doing he was on the grass, full length.

She was appalled. She hated her power over him—it was terrible, cruel. It did not mean delight, but suffering and remorse. It was a power of evil to be restrained and wisely used. It had seemed something to be proud of, to glory in, and here, because of it this wonderful afternoon, when she who wielded it was full of high visions and noble ideals, a man lay under the sky in pain and despair.

Thomasine dropped on her knees.

"Oh, don't, don't!" she cried. "Oh, Blaise, if you really do care! You are trying to drag me down, and that is not love—this is not love. I ought to be so angry with you. You make me wish I had never seen you. . . . Oh, it won't be so terrible . . . it couldn't be . . . it will be all right, I know. And think when you have conquered and come back."

The man grew quiet, but he did not look up. He was absolutely still.

"Go away and leave me, Tom," he said at last, without lifting his head.

"I'll go if you'd rather. You'll come down and go back with me?"

"Yes."

She stood up and left him without another word.

It was long before he came into the courtyard of the little whitewashed inn to join her. She had ordered tea, but he would not come in. He brought out the machine and busied himself over it.

"Will you drive?" she asked, when she came out.

"No," he said, without looking at her.

"We shall have to be quick," she said, "or you will be late," and springing to her place, they swung into the road.

She was conscious of him there lying back in the side-car, strangely listless and still. She tore over the road at top speed, fearing he would be late to take his place in the 'plane. The miles of white road came to an end, they turned in at the gate of Dyleshart and ran swiftly through the streets.

Thomasine dismounted quickly.

She spoke to Blaise as he got out of the car; her voice was desperately matter-of-fact.

"You will have to hurry," she said. "We are a bit late. Good-bye. I will come and watch the start."

He nodded. He did not speak or offer to touch her. She turned quickly away and ran the bicycle into the garage.

It was dark in there after the sunlight without. As Thomasine began to dust the machine she told herself that now he must go—that it was all over . . . and that she never could forget . . . that she would always see that terrible expression in his eyes, hear his voice as it had been when he had appealed to her on the Downs, hear him sobbing, face downwards, into the darkness of his arms. . . .

Suddenly swift footsteps came behind her, she was caught and held fast—swept from her feet—kissed hungrily, passionately—saw Blaise's blue eyes close to her own, heard him say something, repeat it again and again, was strained almost to breaking point, was released and alone.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

THOMASINE went outside the walls alone, still in her motoring outfit, to watch the departure of the cars bearing Lord Gillespie, his suite, and Blaise.

She slipped out quickly and hid amongst some trees. She felt she could not face any one yet, especially after that last episode, which had broken down all her strength and composure so that she had wept hysterically in the garage. Now she watched the cars start, straining her eyes after them, thinking only of Blaise.

"One day he will come back," she said. She lay under the trees, exhausted, and her thoughts went forward—the long, long thoughts of youth.

It was all over now and done with. She was going back to John and little Dick. She thought of them dreamily, her heart growing warm within her, while the dusk deepened and a star came out and quivered in the pale sky.

She rose at last, very tired and a little stiff, but with a mind at peace. She felt that she had been buffeted, and now the storm had passed.

Some one was standing in the shadow by the gate as she approached—some one in a white dress, covered by a long, pale cloak. Thomasine recognized a bride who had but lately come to

Dyleshart to make a home there for herself during her husband's long absence on a difficult mission whither she could not accompany him.

"Good-night," Thomasine said.

"Good-night," came the soft answer. "It is a lovely night."

"Yes, I went out to see them go."

"And I am waiting for Francis. He has been away two days about this journey abroad and he is coming back to-night."

Thomasine smiled at the little pallid face.

"I am going back to my man to-morrow," she said.

"Oh, I am glad. I always knew you were not the sort of woman to be left alone. And he will be so glad when he sees you."

"Will he? Do you think so, really? I am rather afraid. I had rather a feeling that I had burnt my boats behind me."

"Oh, you will know what to say. Trust a woman to know. . . . And you will be awfully happy."

"I hope I shall. I hope I shall," Thomasine said earnestly. "And you will come and stay with me?" she added. "Do say you will come. We can have some good times together."

"I'd love to come. It is in the country, is it not?"

"Yes, Cornwall, by the sea. . . . Oh, I do want to see it again—the white gate with the lilac-bush, the house with the sun shining on the windows, and little Dick and him."

Her voice quivered with tears.

"Why did you come away?"

"Because I was a fool. I wanted what John could not give me. I wanted to do what he would not allow. But now . . . I have changed, I suppose. I'm different."

"You have grown up, that's what it is. Listen ! That's his car !"

Thomasine passed quickly through the gateway. She went to her house, seeking Bertha Wynford, who was in the office, writing at her desk.

Thomasine sat down on the arm of her chair and explained that she was going home.

"I'd like to know what has brought you so suddenly to this decision," Bertha said presently.

"Oh, heaps of things," answered Thomasine. "I seem to have learnt a tremendous lot during these last few days. . . . Oh, yes, I know Dyleshart is good, but until you can entirely change the nature of women like me the men must rule. The influence of the cave-women, of the days of chivalry, of the quiet Victorian age has never been educated out of us. . . . Look at me ! I am young, I am alive. I want to be loved and admired. And only one man may love and admire me. And look at you, Bertha. You are the new generation, the new type, the new breed. You are educated up to the hilt. You don't believe in love and simple things, in God and the old tales—you believe in yourself. . . . Dyleshart's religion is the worship of the Child—it is good in that. But do you believe the Christ-Child really was born of woman, and grew to be a Man Who thought of His mother as he hung dying on the cross ? Why, that very thought makes womanhood, motherhood, something to be revered."

. . . And I am going back to my man, to bake his bread and make his butter, to eat with him and work for him and sleep with him. And I am going back to bring up my son, to teach him to swim and ride, to tell him of my father's ideals. And one day he will tell his children, and so it will go on down the generations, blazing out, as it were, a trail through this muddled world to heaven."

Thomasine had risen from her seat. She had spoken rapidly, gesticulating with her hands. Bertha Wynford had also risen. She came close to Thomasine, and neither her eyes nor her face were any longer cold.

"Be quiet!" she said. "Do you think I don't know all this? Do you think you can ever eradicate from any woman such feelings, such desires? Do you suppose I don't know what love is? Do you think I go alone through life from choice? Do you suppose my arms are empty of children because I wish them so? You said I did not believe in God; I do believe in Him, but I do not any longer pray to Him or worship Him. I prayed to Him once and did He hear me? He is secure in His heaven; He will not help. . . ." She broke off, panting. "Go!" she cried, pointing to the door. "Go and leave me alone!"

Thomasine turned and went out from the room. There was nothing to be said in the face of such passion and pain.

Ah! Love could be so cruel and so sweet. And Love was sweet for her. Let her be true to it and thankful. She went upstairs to change. She stayed a long time in her room, arranging her

possessions for departure. For, as always when her mind was made up, she let no grass grow under her feet.

Presently she came down and began a round of late visits to some of her friends. She came back through the moonlit street at last, slowly and alone. There were lights in the houses, the Hall was brilliantly lit. The moon shone out of a clear sky, black shadows were flung across the silvery whiteness of the street.

"What infinite peace!" Thomasine murmured, looking up at the moon. "What that old moon has seen! . . . What tales she could tell!"

So she returned to her house and slept.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

IT was already growing dark when Thomasine opened the white gate and entered the garden. She halted under the lilac-bush, looking up at the house which stood out against the darkening sky. She heard, as she waited, the old familiar sounds from the farmyard and around. She heard a dog bark, the clatter of a pail on the cobbles, the slow movement of a horse's feet. She stood there so long that all her uneasiness died away, and in its place came a sort of quiet courage, a readiness to face steadfastly whatever might lie before. She had come home at last to her man and her son, ready to put aside all that was individual, all that was for self alone, and to go bravely through with the toil that lay ahead. For the sake of the next generation—for the sake of her son.

She went forward to the door ; she opened it and slipped in. The hall was very dark, the house still.

She went to the farther door and passed through. Some one was moving in the kitchen, and she saw the firelight playing on the ceiling of the room. Something rose within her, hungry, longing. The woman in her, so long suppressed, rose and cried—for what?

She went on.

The dining-room door was open ; she passed through. The room was almost dark ; on the hearth was a smouldering fire, and before it, drawn rather to one side, a cradle.

Thomasine sank down.

It was very dark within the cradle, but she could hear him breathe as he slept—her child, hers, her son. Her straining eyes found the outline of his face and one uncovered arm. The inexplicable feeling within her rose hotly, tear-filled, overwhelmingly strong.

She turned aside, sobbing under her breath, fighting with gritted teeth for control. She dared make no sound. She heard the footsteps in the kitchen come and go, and presently a line of light shone on the wall by the half-open door.

The fire sank behind her with a rustling noise, a little flame sprang out and flickered, sending strange, leaping shadows over the ceiling and walls. The child stirred, and Thomasine grew still, waiting, watching.

She heard in the passage, by the back door, the approach of slow, heavy feet. The colour rushed to her face, the sudden, quick beating of her heart frightened her.

She heard from the kitchen the woman's voice call sharply. She heard the man reply. He went into the kitchen. Did he have supper there?

She still waited, breathless, afraid. He would come in presently because the child was here.

And then, before she knew it, he had opened the door and come in.

Her eyes saw him clearly before he could find

her in that flickering half-light. He saw her standing on the rug, a tall, dark figure, speechless, motionless. She heard him gasp. Then he came to her and seized her arm.

"Tom!"

At that cry the child awoke.

Thomasine swayed in his grasp. For days she carried the marks of his fingers on her arm and gloried in them. She stood face to face with him for a long moment. . . .

"Yes, John," she said simply. "I have come back."

Then, as before, there came into his face the light which she had likened to the gleam of a sword.

"You have come back," he said. His arms went about her. He asked her nothing. It was enough for him to know that she had come. She clung to him, letting him kiss her, glad of his strength, though it crushed her.

"Oh, you have come back!" he said. "You have come back!"

But she knew that what she had to say must be said before he got any farther than that. She drew back in his arms, faced him, and spoke.

"Yes," she said, "and before anything else I have this to say. . . . I have come back because I know now that life holds nothing for me so dear and so beautiful as I can find in my own home with you. Not with any other man but you. Not in any other place but where you are, where Love is. I do not regret that I went, for now I am sure that nothing can satisfy me without you and the common lot of women. . . . Is it enough?"

"Wait," he said. He went to the lamp and lighted it and came back to her.

"It was dark," he said. "I could not see."

She stood before him quite quiet and motionless. Her slim figure had developed, her eyes were unutterably deep and dark, her lips wistfully sweet and strong. The restless gaiety was altogether gone; her girlhood was gone; she had come back to him a woman. The girl Thomasine, whom he had so loved, for whom he had so suffered, was replaced by a woman in whom he saw, as in a flash, strength, steadfastness, sympathy, in whom was combined the attributes of the wife, the comrade, the Madonna.

His arms as they encircled her were so tender that she trembled almost to tears. He let his face rest a long time against her hair, and in the silence little Dick cried.

She turned from him and bent down. Then he saw her with his son in her arms—the woman and the child, the greatest forces in the world—and he kissed her again as though he could not break off.

The child thrust his little hands into her hair, fascinated by the glory of it. She sat down with him by the hearth. The lamp flared up and went out. In the light of the flickering fire the man came and knelt by the woman who had taken up her burden. He need have no further fear for himself or for her.

The fire sank lower as the silence grew deep—a silence in which two brave hearts held communion and were still. The woman looked at the man who knelt by her, holding her; her

hand passed and repassed over his hair. She had been so eager for accomplishment, and lo ! here at her hand a stupendous task was set—a task of work, of waiting, of service, of a house to keep up, of a man-child to rear, of a commonplace life to illumine with love.

She thought of her old longing for wandering, for a man's work, for toil. They had seemed so much more to be desired than simpleness and peace. But now, with divine eyes, her soul saw beyond the flame of glory the smoke of the pyre, beyond the banner the pall, and the glamour was gone.

Then John, still kneeling, drew himself up so that he might kiss the lips of Thomasine, his wife, whom now he had not only loved but worshipped ; recognizing in her all that was divine, knowing her worthy of all he could ever hope to offer, seeing in her the guardian of his soul, for which she was responsible to Heaven, even as he must guard her body, the hearth by which she sat, the land in which she dwelt, from desecration.

"My heart and my soul !" he whispered.

And Thomasine, holding him, felt little Dick move his head in the crook of her arm.

"The River of Life is deep," she said softly, following her thoughts, "and unresistingly strong. It has been bearing me onwards all the while, but the spray blinded me."

She drew him close.

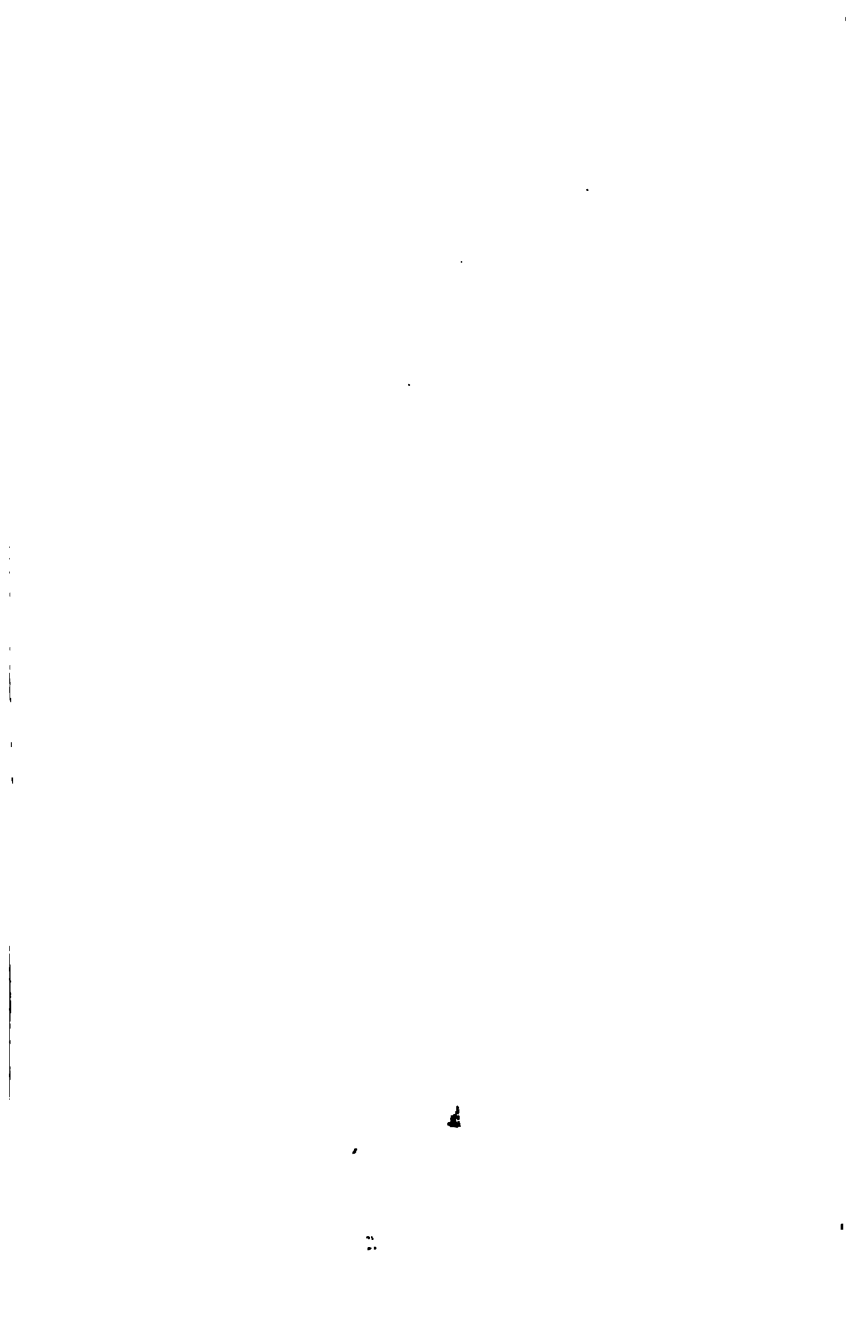
"The spray blinded me," she said, and again, in the darkness, the silence fell.

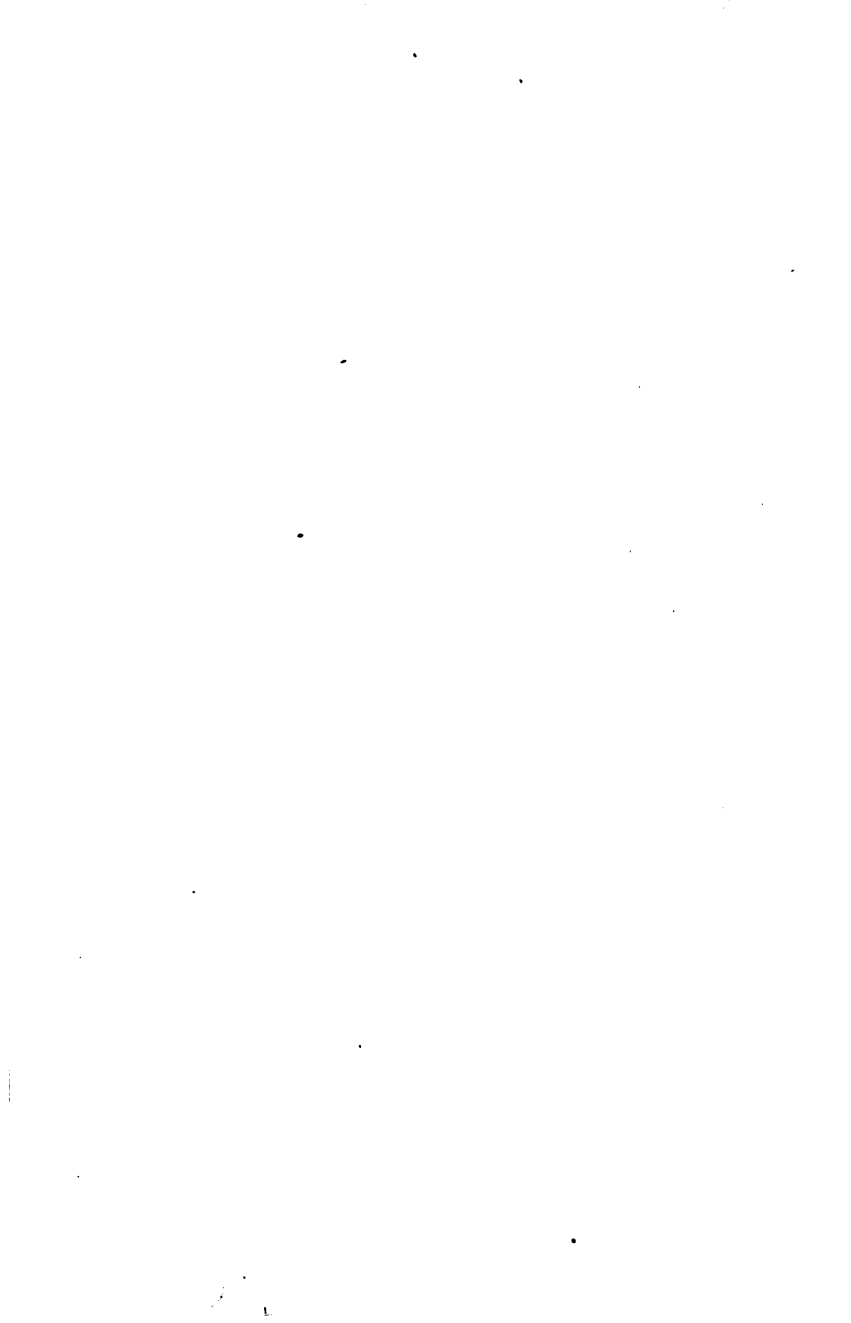
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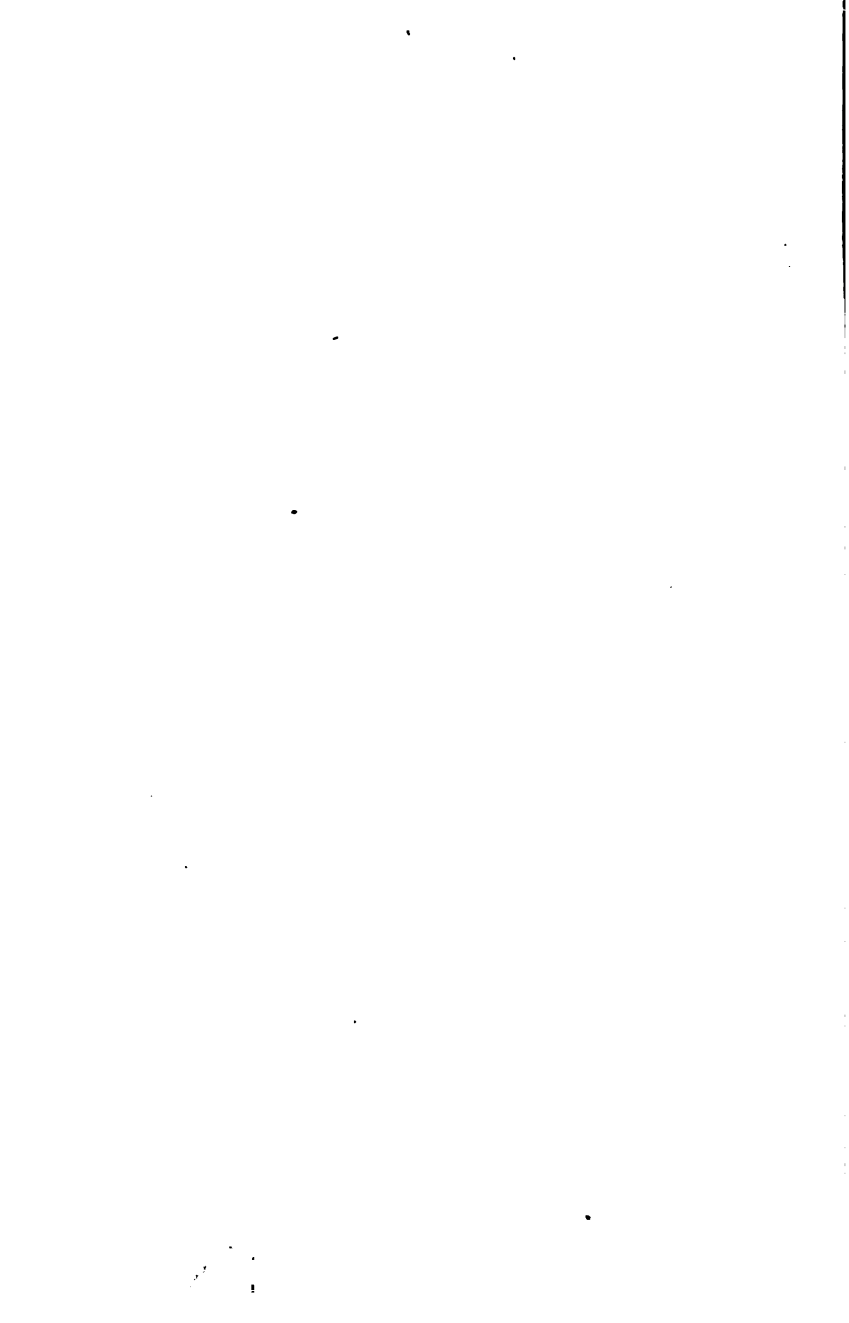
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